Booklist

Leading book discovery

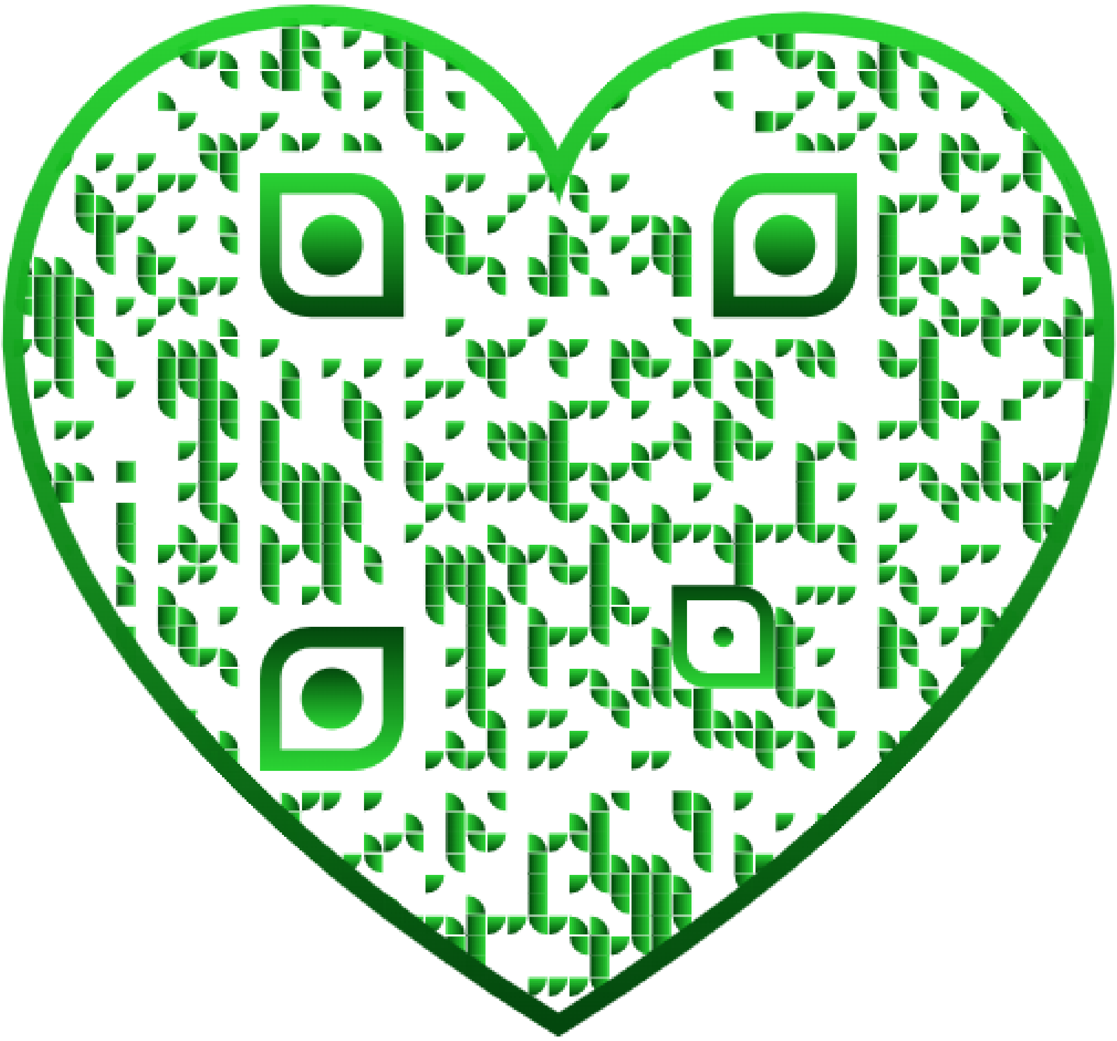
Vol. 122 No. 2
10/25

Spotlights on

The Arts & Series Nonfiction

My Nana, painting by Lisa Moore,
from *Boy from the North Country*,
by Sam Sussman

ALA American Library Association



Kickoff to Football

New! Fall 2025

Jumpstart reading for young football fans!

Sports fanatics often start at an early age—and many develop their interest at the same time as their blossoming reading skills! Give early readers the chance to learn about their favorite teams all on their own with this photo-packed series. Loaded with features such as a table of contents, captions, sidebars, maps, fast facts, a phonetic glossary, author details, and research sources, this series provides engaging, age-appropriate content for new readers to explore independently.

Audience

Reading Level: Grade 1
Interest Level: K–Grade 3

Features

24 pages, 8 x 8 inches
Full-color photographs
Author/Illustrator biography
Detailed maps
Fast facts
Index
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Informative captions and sidebars
Phonetic glossary
Sources for further research
Suggested websites
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won twice.
keep trying for
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KANSAS CITY
CHIEFS
MARV ALINAS

The Team

The Kansas City Chiefs are a football team. They play in Kansas City, Missouri. They started in 1959.

The Kansas City Chiefs run onto the field to play football.

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The Child's World

12 new titles available on childsworld.com

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George Kendall

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October 2025
Volume 122, Issue 2

Letter from the Publisher / George Kendall

October already? Why does it seem that time passes more quickly as one ages? I'm not the first to feel this way; there's plenty of research on this topic. A simple Google search offers a few suggestions for slowing the perception of time. These techniques seem like good advice whether or not they actually alter our sense of time passing: seek new experiences (introduce novelty into your life), live mindfully (consciously process sights, sounds, and feelings), and embrace variety (get out of your routines when possible).

I'll add another: read more books and vary the types of books you read. Halloween is around the corner so this is the perfect time of year to read horror and fantasy fiction. Check out our October *Booklist Reader* for incredible sf, fantasy, and horror recommendations. This issue of *Booklist* spotlights the arts. Look for reading suggestions in our Top 10 Art Books (p.28, 87) or Donna Seaman's Broadway Musicals (p.26).

On the Cover
From *Boy from the North Country*, by Sam Sussman, which received a starred review in *Booklist*'s August 2025 issue and which appears in Essentials: Novels about Real-Life Artists, p. 46. Cover art, *My Nana*, painting by Lisa Moore. Used with permission of the artist and Penguin Press.

Does reading books about the arts slow time? Maybe not. Often when I'm reading it seems like time flies. But in a general sense, the arts help me with emotional well-being and creative and cultural expression. When I'm immersed in the arts, I'm calm, my sense of empathy is enhanced, and I feel more appreciative and thankful for the experiences I have and for the world around me. The arts help us more deeply appreciate the time we have; it is more precious and fulfilling. I find it gratifying to embrace the arts, especially in a world that is so troublesome and challenging. That's not to say we should disregard real-world events, which are unavoidable given the information superhighway. But a break, an escape into artistic expression, into reading books and learning, is an antidote for tumultuous times.

Most importantly, I am thankful every day for libraries. Libraries offer people from all walks of life access to these avenues of personal enrichment. Libraries are gateways to new experiences and help all of us embrace variety. Libraries positively enhance the time we have. Thank you for all you do.

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Adult Nonfiction

Philosophy & Psychology

Kin: The Future of Family.

By Sophie Lucido Johnson.

Nov. 2025. 288p. Atria, $29 (9781668060650); e-book (9781668060674). 158.2.

Author and art-school instructor Johnson offers a meditation on the people we choose to build our lives with. In conversational prose, Johnson explains how contemporary society has pulled humans so far from our village-like community of relationships. She explores who can be kin (chosen family) and how a tradition of kinship can ease the pressures of child-rearing as well as the loneliness that plagues us. Her past writing on polyamory (*Many Love*, 2018) factors heavily into how she lays out the possibilities for family relationships. Johnson encourages readers to find their people and share resources: child-free people should offer to watch their friends' children; friends should cook dinner together and use each other's kitchens as needed; those with gardens should allow friends to take up plots. We should all be good neighbors, she asserts, and take interest in the souls around us; proximity can encourage curiosity and care. Johnson reminds us that humans were never meant to raise children or experience life in isolation as she inspires all to take stock and connect. —*Courtney Eathorne*

Offline Humans: How to Stop Scrolling and Reconnect with the Real World.

By Natalie Alzate.

Oct. 2025. 240p. illus. DK, $25 (9780593847008). 158.1.

After ten years as a content creator, Alzate decided she was tired of screens ruling her life. One week offline prompted her to set some boundaries in her onscreen life. In this slim, pastel-colored, softly illustrated book, the author shares strategies not only on cutting back on technology but also filling those newly found hours with meaningful pursuits. Challenges, checklists, and journal prompts are abundant. Alzate takes it slowly, beginning with hourly challenges including brief routines to start the day. She offers rituals to make days more mindful, and weekly planning to set offline dates and goals. Each season becomes an inspiration for stepping away from digital devices and re-entering the physical world. Alzate isn't advocating a complete digital desert. (In fact she has an Instagram account, @OfflineHumans, to provide additional support to the offline community.) What she's offering are ways to cut back on constant connection and fill those hours with meaning. While aimed at the 20–40s crowd, this gentle book will be an inspiration to anyone who wants to quiet the background noise and find mindfulness. —*Candace Smith*

YA: *Older teens looking for a digital break will find some welcome strategies. CS.*

Religion

Embracing the Old Witch in the Woods: Liberating Feminine Wisdom from Christian Patriarchy.

By Angela J. Herrington.

Oct. 2025. 218p. Broadleaf, paper, $19.99 (9798889835233); e-book (9798889835257). 270.082.

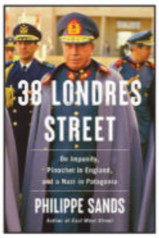
Herrington seeks to reclaim the long-feared archetype of the crone as a source of deep feminine wisdom. As a faith deconstruction coach and graduate of Wesley seminary, she weaves personal insight with cultural critique, challenging readers to unlearn patriarchal messages that have shaped how women see their bodies, desires, and roles. The figure of the witch becomes a guide back to the self, especially in the face of Christian traditions that erased goddesses and replaced them with male authority. Readers are encouraged to question inherited ideas about motherhood, self-sacrifice, and obedience. Through themes of aging, pleasure, intuition, and emotional expression, Herrington invites a return to the body as a trusted partner rather than something to conquer or correct. Each chapter includes reflective practices to help reconnect with inner knowing, explore cycles of nature, and begin healing generational wounds. Pleasure, rest, and nourishment are reframed as necessary forms of resistance. By honoring the body's wisdom and embracing authentic expression, readers step into a more rooted and liberated way of being. —*Sarah Myers*

Social Sciences

★ 38 Londres Street: On Impunity, Pinochet in England, and a Nazi in Patagonia.

By Philippe Sands.

Oct. 2025. 480p. Knopf, $35 (9780593319758); e-book (9780593319765). 345.83.



Sands, a lawyer specializing in international law, didn't intend to write a trilogy when *East West Street: On the Origins of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity* (2016) was published. What began as a journey to find his beloved grandfather's home in Lviv, now in Ukraine, became an odyssey of both international and personal significance. Sands followed the historical breadcrumbs of escaped Nazis in *The Ratline: Love, Lies and Justice on the Trail of a Nazi Fugitive* (2021). Here Sands continues that story of impunity, tracking individual Nazis directly responsible for mass murder who dispersed around the world, particularly Walter Rauff, who designed and supervised Hitler's mobile gas chambers, precursors to those at at Auschwitz. Rauff, the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, and Sands intersected in 1998 when Pinochet was arrested in London with an international warrant and indicted for war crimes. It turns out that Rauff played an indirect part in the murder of members of Sands' family during the Holocaust, and he was later involved with torture and disappearances in Chile during the Pinochet regime. Drawing on extensive research and interviews with key figures, Sands builds suspense like the best of mystery writers. *38 Londres Street* is a masterful and timely mix of history, journalism, and memoir. —*Raúl Niño*

The Age of Extraction: How Tech Platforms Conquered the Economy and Threaten Our Future Prosperity.

By Tim Wu.

Nov. 2025. 224p. Knopf, $30 (9780593321249); e-book (9780593321256). 338.7.

Columbia University law professor Wu, a longtime advocate of net neutrality, argues that today's massively influential platforms, once seen as forces for good—for example, Twitter, Facebook, Apple, and Amazon, but even, say, large medical and real-estate companies—have become exquisitely fine-tuned to extract data, attention, and profit margins from their users. No news there really, but Wu further postulates that, without attentive public governance, these platforms can foster conditions conducive to societal breakdown and the emergence of authoritarian strongmen through a five-step process: monopolization, extraction, emergence of mass resentment, democratic failure, and the rise of the strongman. The most effective response, writes Wu, would be to reframe these platforms as, "for better or worse, the utilities of public life," and thus to supervise them as governments already do with established utility companies—for instance, imposing rules of conduct and capping earnings. Wu's clarion call, which might be nearly impossible to hear above Big Tech's deafening stampede into AI, is no less consequential. —*Alan Moores*

Autocrats vs. Democrats: China, Russia, America, and the New Global Disorder.

By Michael McFaul.

Oct. 2025. 512p. Mariner, $35 (9780358677871). 327.

Foreign policy expert and former ambassador to Russia McFaul (*From Cold War to Hot Peace*, 2018) writes that great power competition in international relations is back, but there is not necessarily a new Cold War. A reinvigorated Russia, a rising China, Iran, and North Korea are working against the American-led liberal international order of multilateral organizations based on the rule of law and human rights. McFaul compares and contrasts the histories of each autocratic power, their bilateral relations with the U.S., the state of economic and military power compared to that of the U.S. and other democracies, and the strength of their ideological systems. While acknowledging the current adoption of isolationism and protectionism in America, McFaul presents a number of policy changes and renewed goals for future American leaders to strive for in confronting challenges from the autocratic bloc. *Autocrats vs. Democrats* is a detailed com-

High-Demand Hot List

Look for reviews of these high-demand titles in forthcoming issues of *Booklist*.

Two series finales, two EGOT winners, two political memoirs: (never) too many exciting new books coming up! —*Annie Bostrom*

107 Days. By Kamala Harris. Simon & Schuster, $30 (9781668211656). Sep.
Harris, the first woman elected vice president of the U.S., reflects on the 107 days of her 2024 presidential campaign and ultimate loss to Donald Trump.

The Daughter Who Remains. By Nnedi Okorafor. DAW, $23 (9780756418991). Feb.
The conclusion to Okorafor's Africanfuturist She Who Knows trilogy sees sorcerer Najeeba at the height of her powers and facing her most formidable foe yet.

London Falling: A Mysterious Death in a Gilded City and a Family's Search for Truth. By Patrick Radden Keefe. Doubleday, $35 (9780385548533). Apr.
Expanding on a *New Yorker* piece, Keefe investigates the death of a London teenager caught up in the city's crime underworld.

Judge Stone. By James Patterson and Viola Davis. Little, Brown $32 (9780316579834). Mar.
Teaming up with powerhouse Patterson, EGOT-winning actor Davis introduces small-town Alabama judge Mary Stone as a bombshell case lands on her desk.

Kids, Wait till You Hear This! By Liza Minnelli. Grand Central, $36 (9781538773666). Mar.
The first autobiography from a woman (and EGOT winner) who needs no introduction!

My Dear You. By Rachel Khong. Knopf, $29 (9780593803691). Apr.
Khong's follow-up to the best-selling Read with Jenna book club pick *Real Americans* (2024) is a story collection featuring relatable characters caught in fantastical circumstances.

See You on the Other Side. By Jay McInerney. Knopf, $30 (9780593804797). Apr.
In the final volume of the Calloway family tetralogy that McInerney began with *Brightness Falls,* a friend's thirty-fifth anniversary celebration in the spring of 2020 spurs a major marital reckoning for the Calloways.

Stand. By Cory Booker. St. Martin's, $30 (9781250436733). Feb.
Senator Booker expands on his history-making 25-hour speech to the Senate in early 2025 with a message to all Americans about standing against injustice.

Vigil. By George Saunders. Random, $28 (9780525509622). Jan.
Saunders' buzzed-about first novel since the award-winning *Lincoln in the Bardo* (2017) stars a dying oil-company CEO and the soul tasked with escorting him to the afterlife.

You with the Sad Eyes. By Christina Applegate. Little, Brown, $32 (9780316594929). Mar.
Actress Applegate tells stories from her childhood in L.A.'s Laurel Canyon, early years of stardom, many iconic roles, and her life after being diagnosed with M.S.

pendium of current foreign policy issues that, while serious, are not insurmountable if, McFaul explains, the U.S. can overcome partisan polarization and regain the conviction and wherewithal to act in defense of democracy and humanitarianism. —*James Pekoll*

Banished Citizens: A History of the Mexican American Women Who Endured Repatriation.

By Marla A. Ramírez.

Oct. 2025. 368p. illus. Harvard, $29.95 (9780674295940); e-book (9780674302013). 305.9.

The current administration's deployment of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) to target immigrants, especially those from Latin America, is not new nor unique in the U.S.' long record of racism and of treating Mexican immigrants as cheap, disposable labor. From an immigrant family herself, Ramírez has carefully investigated the historical context and traumatic fall-out for the Rodríguez, De Anda, Robles, and Espinoza families, Mexican Americans "banished" from the country between the two world wars (1922–39). After building successful lives in California, these mixed-status families with U.S.-citizen children were sent "back" to Mexico. From Roseville, Pasadena, and Redlands, Ramírez tracks the families' banishment to Sinaloa, Jalisco, and Zacatecas, then, ultimately, their return to California in the 1960s. Opening with a comprehensive introduction, Ramírez documents these experiences via oral history testimonies, original documents, and photographs; shares insights into the inadequate efforts at reparation; and offers suggestions for effective redress. Her thorough research is backed by maps and sources, and an index is included. The epilogue brings the story up to current times as history tragically repeats itself. —*Sara Martínez*

Black-Owned: The Revolutionary Life of the Black Bookstore.

By Char Adams.

Nov. 2025. 304p. illus. Penguin/Tiny Reparations, $32 (9780593474235); e-book (9780593474259). 338.09.

Since the early nineteenth century, Black bookstores have played a major role in community-building, political education, activism, and Black pride. Adams chronicles the courageous, determined, and tenacious people who ran legendary bookstores across the country. The desire of store owners to create spaces for Black education and growth has been countered by the determination of white politicians and publishers to snuff this out. David Ruggles, who started the first Black bookstore in 1834, was threatened with lynching and enslavement for selling abolitionist literature; his store was eventually torched. Black bookstores during the civil rights era were regularly surveilled by Hoover's FBI as "cultural centers for extremism." Under Nixon, the IRS hassled Black bookstores he deemed "ideological, militant, subversive, or radical organizations." Yet Black bookstores continued to respond to the needs of students, families, activists, and organizers. Despite overt racism, gentrification, and the online revolution, the Black bookstore will never vanish. As Maya Angelou observed: "Bookstores owned by African-American merchants have helped us to survive and thrive with some passion, some compassion, some humor and style." —*Lesley Williams*

Captain's Dinner: A Shipwreck, An Act of Cannibalism, and a Murder Trial that Changed Legal History.

By Adam Cohen.

Nov. 2025. 448p. Authors Equity, $32 (9798893310597); e-book (9798893310603). 364.1.

It happened in 1884. A yacht sank, but the four-man crew made it to a lifeboat. They spent nearly three weeks adrift at sea. Finally, the captain, Thomas Dudley, made a decision: they would kill and eat the youngest member of the crew. Dudley and his remaining crewmates made it home safely, but soon they wished they hadn't as they were plunged into a murder trial that rocked the world and set legal precedent that still stands today: necessity is not an acceptable justification for murder. Cohen (*Supreme Inequality,* 2020) realizes that there are two stories here: the story of the sinking ship and the crew's fight for survival, and the murder trial that followed. We need

A Rich, Gripping Portrait of Young JFK That Reveals the Underdog Behind the Icon

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John F. Kennedy's Early Path to Leadership
INCLUDES RARE PHOTOS
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Author of JFK & The Muckers of Choate

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— **Publishers Weekly/BookLife, Editor's Pick**

"A well-informed and engaging work on JFK's formative years."
— **Kirkus Reviews**

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"Reveals JFK as an underdog… a riveting and deeply human journey that breathes new life into a well-known figure." — **Evan Swartz**, 21-year-old Student at Loyola University Maryland

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to know the first story—who Thomas Dudley was, and what he and his crewmates went through—to fully appreciate the second. We also need the historical context to understand just how important this trial was: this was not the first act of cannibalism in the name of survival, but it was the first that changed the world. For students of legal history, this one's a must-read. —*David Pitt*

DILF: Did I Leave Feminism?

By Jude Ellison S. Doyle.

Oct. 2025. 240p. Melville, paper, $19.99 (9781685892159); e-book (9781685892166). 305.4.

Doyle (*Dead Blondes and Bad Mothers*, 2019) quit his job in 2020: "For most of my adult life, my job was to be a woman." He came out as a trans man, beginning a process of transition that's never truly over. In this examination of gender, how it's defined, and what it does to people, Doyle offers a scathing indictment of feminism's troubled anti-trans legacy and how it continues to the present day. Skewering criticism that transitioning from being a woman to supposedly enjoy the privileges of being a man in a patriarchal society amounts to a betrayal, Doyle argues that transition is threatening because it shows that power hierarchies based on gender are not inevitable. Pulling from feminist history, including profiles of influential thinkers and activists, Doyle paints a dark picture of the gender and racial dynamics at work to keep white men in power, calling for a safer world for trans children, for feminism that accounts for transmasculine people, and for seeing trans people not as threats to systems based on exclusion but as examples of what's possible with the will to change. —*Bridget Thoreson*

Front Street: Resistance and Rebirth in the Tent Cities of Techlandia.

By Brian Barth.

Nov. 2025. 304p. Astra, $29 (9781662601613); e-book (9781662601620). 363.5.

Award-winning journalist Barth's debut book is a culmination of years of research on the unhoused in three of Silicon Valley's largest encampments: Wood Street in Oakland, Wolfe Camp in Cupertino, and Crash Zone in San Jose. With boots on the ground, he has immersed himself in these worlds, unveiling the lives of those struggling to find affordable housing. He shares first-hand accounts of people who are facing mental and/or financial struggles, and are harassed by police and government officials alike. Barth dispels the myths that those who are unhoused are mentally ill, are a danger to the community, or don't want to work; in fact, many have regular jobs. The book delves into hard questions, like why the unhoused don't take advantage of social services and temporary shelters. One chapter focuses on how governments address homelessness and are working to solve the issue. Readers will be drawn into the personal stories and the well-researched topic, offering a fresh look at the struggle for housing and how the solution is as complex as the issue itself is. —*Jennifer Adams*

Girls Play Dead: Acts of Self-Preservation.

By Jen Percy.

Nov. 2025. 288p. Doubleday, $29 (9780385550048); e-book (9780385550055). 362.88.

In her second book, award-winning journalist Percy (*Demon Camp*, 2014) trains a wide lens on sexual violence and how it's dealt with. Rather than seeking answers to the inhumane ways humans treat one another, Percy is concerned with how victims cope with the trauma and suffering caused by these cruelties. At its most interesting, Percy's inquiry embraces contradiction, particularly in studying how rape victims often behave counter to general assumptions (particularly by law enforcement), such as genuinely asking abusers if they had a good time, "freezing" and leaving their bodies, and even experiencing bodily pleasure, "something more unbelievable than nothing." She also intentionally muddies the narrative with the story of a rape victim who admitted to Percy that she lied under oath, and the ripple effects of this untruth. In perhaps the most damning testimony to the current state of things, Percy profiles three women serving time for killing their abusers, none of whom have been allowed clemency even after recent legislation makes the abuse they suffered newly relevant. Accessible reading on a difficult and necessary topic. —*Annie Bostrom*

★ The House of Beauty: Lessons from the Image Industry.

By Arabelle Sicardi.

Oct. 2025. 288p. Norton, $29.99 (9780393531626). 338.766.

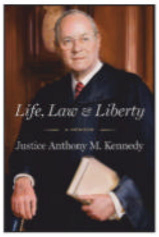
This insightful collection of essays about the appalling human costs required to support the international beauty trade is revelatory, shocking, and ultimately horrifying. Beauty culture insider Sicardi, a prolific blogger, perfumery expert, queer beauty icon, and former Buzzfeed beauty editor, exposes the utter disregard for equitable human justice by beauty industry conglomerates. Documented accounts expose horror stories: young children dying while mining for mica, a common ingredient in eye shadow; Indigenous people swindled out of ancestral lands and exploited to produce crops like jasmine for face creams; human hair harvested from desperately poor individuals in Asia to become wigs for consumers in America; and the staggering amounts of waste generated by every aspect of the beauty trade, from manufacturing to packaging to makeup containers. Sicardi goes beyond investigative reporting when considering fresh interpretations of concepts like "normal" and "beautiful," providing updates on emerging cosmeceuticals and cyborg and body-engineering innovations (including body-hacking concerns) and proposing mitigating actions to effect both immediate and future change. This offering raises important and critical concerns regarding the ever-expanding, seemingly inexhaustible image industry. —*Kathleen McBroom*

> **YA:** *Sicardi's timely and topical messages should resonate with young consumers concerned about personal appearances, offering valuable insights to teen beauty culture and image influencers. KM.*

★ Life, Law & Liberty.

By Anthony M. Kennedy.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Simon & Schuster, $30 (9781668052747); e-book (9781668052761). 347.73.



Nearing his ninetieth birthday, Kennedy reflects on his legendary career as one of the country's preeminent jurists, crediting his formative years as a child of the West as the moral foundation for his many roles in life. Born in Sacramento, California, in 1936, Kennedy holds that place and time in deep reverence. His father was a lawyer, his mother a civic activist, and both were excellent guides for the kind of public servant Kennedy aspired to become. During his 30-year tenure on the Supreme Court, Kennedy wrote the majority opinion on some of the twentieth century's most complex cases, including *Citizens United v. FEC*, regarding the First Amendment rights of corporations, and *Obergefell v. Hodges*, codifying same-sex marriage. Such difficult decisions, he asserts, were informed by his earlier influences and experiences. Throughout, Kennedy infuses his memoir with an eloquence and passion that express deep regard for the rule of law and the sanctity of the legal process. At a time when popular opinion of the nation's judiciary is at an all-time low, Kennedy's reasoned explanations of the court's decisions and procedures serve to remind his audience of the guiding principles behind this hallowed but often misunderstood institution. —*Carol Haggas*

The Monsters We Make: Murder, Obsession, and the Rise of Criminal Profiling.

By Rachel Corbett.

Oct. 2025. 256p. Norton, $28.99 (9780393867695). 364.9.

In popular culture, criminal profiling is portrayed as a near-magic tool to catch serial killers by understanding the psychology of a criminal. But its history is much more complicated than TV shows like *Criminal Minds* depict. Framed by author Corbett's personal connection to domestic violence and murder, this book is a well-researched analysis of the evolution of criminal profiling. Corbett examines the Jack the Ripper investigations, Harvard psychologist Henry Murray's unethical experiments on personality change, Dorothy Lewis' research into violence and neurology, the Unabomber investigation, and the devastating impact of the rise of profiling at-risk youth to theoretically prevent future criminality. She also traces debates about whether criminal tendencies are inherent pieces of personality. The upsetting final chapter looks at the Pasco County Sheriff's Office's harassment of Robert Jones and his family as part of an "intelligence-led policing" program in the mid-2010s. Corbett succeeds in questioning the reliance on profiling in policing and ultimately, the stories we tell ourselves about who is a monster and why. A thought-provoking read for a culture obsessed with true crime. —*Laura Chanoux*

Power Lines: The Human Costs of American Energy in Transition.

By Sanya Carley and David Konisky.

Oct. 2025. 336p. illus. Univ. of Chicago, $30 (9780226825625). 333.790.

This sobering look at the current state of energy goes beyond recent weather-related headlines to dig into the realities of unequal access to everyday power and connectivity. While authors Carley and Konisky reference major climate events, they devote more discussion to the remote and lower socioeconomic communities largely left behind by green initiatives like smart buildings and electric cars. The authors state their focus as identifying and more fully understanding problems as opposed to devising solutions, and they summarize a decade of research supported by statistics, tables, and excerpts from interviews. They concentrate on real impacts felt by real people, whether West Virginia coal miners, Detroit autoworkers, or e-waste contamination containment workers in Africa. Their culminating recommendations urge a return of energy supply choices and control to local communities; multi- and cross-sectional partnerships with equal investments in resilience, adaptability, and sustainability; and increased decarbonization. As policymakers look to the future, the authors suggest they disassociate energy decisions from technology and economic concerns and reframe actions through environmental and human justice lenses. Thoughtful, persuasive arguments. —*Kathleen McBroom*

A Promise Delivered: Ten American Heroes and the Battle to Rename Our Nation's Military Bases.

By Ty Seidule and Connor Williams.

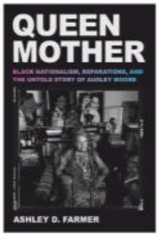
Nov. 2025. 368p. St. Martin's, $29 (9781250330284); e-book (9781250330291). 355.

In 2021, a bipartisan military–civilian commission was tasked with renaming army bases named after Confederate officers. The commission presented findings spanning the history of the army, including detailed biographies of each army-veteran candidate whose name was considered. In *A Promise Delivered,* panel members Seidule and Williams share their work. Each chapter begins with a very brief history of each fort and the Confederate for whom it was originally named. Some of the heroes considered for replacement names are already famous—Dwight D. Eisenhower as well as Hal Moore, the real-life army lieutenant general behind the film *We Were Soldiers Once*. The rest, as the authors demonstrate, all merited recognition as well: men and women of varied races and backgrounds who overcame great odds to become leaders across the history of the army. After completion of the manuscript, but prior to publication, the Trump administration abruptly restored the original names to the bases. In the preface, the authors acknowledge their disappointment but vow to fight to restore what they had worked for. An accessible and surprisingly timely work of history. —*Kirk Johnson*

★ Queen Mother: Black Nationalism, Reparations, and the Untold Story of Audley Moore.

By Ashley Farmer.

Nov. 2025. 496p. Pantheon, $32 (9780593701546); e-book (9780593701553). 320.5409.

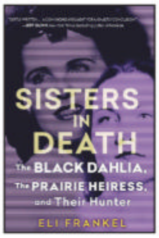

QUEEN MOTHER
BLACK NATIONALISM, REPARATIONS, AND THE UNTOLD STORY OF AUDLEY MOORE
ASHLEY D. FARMER

"At times, the life of an activist can look like barely organized chaos," writes historian Farmer (*Remaking Black Power*, 2017) in her conclusion to this magisterial new biography of activist Audley Moore. That this book exists at all is a testament to Farmer's own tenacity in retrieving Moore's scattered archival records and bringing them together in a single, cohesive story. Born in New Orleans to a wealthy family, then cast aside after her father's death to live in poverty, Moore spent her life fighting for reparations, Black nationalism, and Black liberation. A charismatic speaker and talented organizer, she worked across organizations and, eventually, across national borders to become one of the foremost figures in the history of Black American resistance. Farmer does not attempt to elide Moore's failings (notably, her affection and support for Ugandan dictator Idi Amin), but places them into the broader context of Moore's life and work. In a time of consolidating federal power and heightened oppression of minority groups, *Queen Mother* reminds readers that the value of the struggle is not in achieving landmark victories, but in continuing to move doggedly forward in the face of all adversity. "Struggle," wrote Queen Mother Moore, "is my life." —*Jenny Hamilton*

★ Sisters in Death: The Black Dahlia, the Prairie Heiress, and Their Hunter.

By Eli Frankel.

Oct. 2025. 400p. Kensington/Citadel, $28.99 (9780806543765); e-book (9780806543789). 364.152.



Frankel presents a thorough investigation of the Black Dahlia case, the murder of Elizabeth Short in L.A. in the early days of 1947. Considering police records, new evidence, personal letters, interviews with still-living witnesses, and descendants, he puts together a puzzle that leads back six years earlier to the murder of Leila Welsh in Kansas City in 1941. Daughter of a prominent family and heir to a real-estate empire, Leila was found brutally murdered in her own bedroom. The chief of the Kansas City Police Department spearheaded the investigation, but he was stymied by a political machine that wanted the Jackson County Sheriff's Office to get the credit. As a result, the investigation went awry, and the case became cold until the LAPD became interested in the Welsh case because of similarities between Welsh's and Short's murders, and when it became clear that one suspect knew both of the victims. With his impressive research, Frankel makes a compelling argument that that man was the perpetrator. With a gripping, swiftly paced narrative and an excellent comparison of both cases, *Sisters in Death* is a welcome addition to the lore of the Black Dahlia that will appeal to true-crime aficionados. —*John Faria*

★ Stitching Freedom: A True Story of Injustice, Defiance, and Hope in Angola Prison.

By Gary Tyler and Ellen Bravo.

Oct. 2025. 288p. Atria/One Signal, $29 (9781668097328); e-book (9781668097342). 365.

Tyler grew up in Louisiana, where inequity was omnipresent for many African Americans, even with the dismantling of segregation. By 1974, racial tensions were increasing as court-ordered busing led to the integration of public schools. Vocal about the disparities between

Thinking Ethically
A Handbook for Making Moral Choices
LATINO FIRSTS
THE HANDY LAW ANSWER BOOK
BIGFOOT SIGHTINGS
TRUE TALES FROM ACROSS AMERICA
GHOSTLY ENCOUNTERS
TERRIFYINGLY TRUE HAUNTINGS
DARK SPIRITS
Monsters, Demons and Devils
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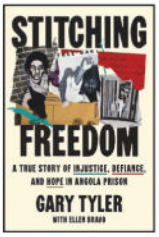
Black and white students at his own school, 17-year-old Tyler was targeted by school officials and suspended for unfounded reasons on October 7, 1974. This day would alter the author's life forever, as he later became implicated in the fatal shooting of a fellow student. Despite flimsy evidence against him, eyewitness testimony that was coerced, and a lawyer that underrepresented him to the extent of legal malpractice, Tyler was convicted of first-degree murder and faced the death penalty. Over 40-plus years at Louisiana's Angola Prison, Tyler maintained his innocence and learned the craft of embroidery, an outlet for his imagination and creativity. *Stitching Freedom* is a riveting memoir of his survival under harrowing conditions. Tyler is a man of undimmed resolve who remains an advocate for the rights of the incarcerated, and his powerful story is one of an undeniable inner strength and a willingness to speak out against injustice. —*Philip Zozzaro*


STITCHING
FREEDOM
A TRUE STORY OF INJUSTICE, DEFIANCE, AND HOPE IN ANGOLA PRISON
GARY TYLER
WITH ELLEN BRAVO

Undammed: Freeing Rivers and Bringing Communities to Life.

By Tara Lohan.

Oct. 2025. 288p. Island, $32 (9781642833348). 333.91.

Drawing on nearly 20 years of environmental journalism, Lohan delivers a compelling critique of the history of America's dam-building obsession, the growing removal movement, and its effect on the nation's rivers. With ecological grief on the rise, reading about environmental issues can be disheartening, and Lohan does not shy away from the negative impact that dams have on wildlife as well as on Indigenous communities. However, she manages to give readers hope by discussing the positive effects of removing dams. When Lohan visits the former site of the Glines Canyon Dam, for instance, she meets with members of the Lower Elwha Klallam tribe, who share the joy they felt salmon fishing again after the long-awaited dam removals along the Elwha River. While Lohan's writing is generally straightforward, it at times becomes philosophical: "Dam removals can help restore not just river function but our collective memory." Readers of environmental nonfiction and fans of books like Peter Brewitt's *Same River Twice* (2019) and Steven Hawley's *Cracked* (2023) will appreciate Lohan's factual yet optimistic message. —*Katie Pomeroy*

Unwed & Unbothered: The Defiant Lives of Single Women Throughout History.

By Emma Duval.

2025. 208p. illus. Andrews McMeel, paper, $18.99 (9798881600037); e-book (9798881606152). 305.26.

There is strong precedent, as this book shows, of women eschewing marriage and succeeding admirably in the single life. The introduction gives a brief historical overview of single women as (usually negative) stereotypes. A two-page chronology highlighting historical achievements by single women follows. Using a thematic arrangement, Duval then highlights 84 women who had "rich, fulfilling, exceptional lives" and their thoughts on marriage and singlehood. Figures range from Greta Garbo and Jane Austen to ancient Indian philosopher Gargi Vachaknvia and sculptor Edmonia Lewis; women from a variety of times and cultures are well represented. Chapters cover ancient history, marriage as an institution, self-advocacy, and heads of state. Each entry includes a one-page biography and usually a colorful, stylized portrait and starts with a summarizing paragraph, then describes the woman's life, and ends with her legacy. Source notes, extensive bibliography, and an index conclude the volume. The writing is clear, engaging, and very supportive of each woman. As the author concludes in her preface: "a project that uplifts the lives of single women is relevant to twenty-first-century readers and feminists." —*Lesley Farmer*

What Debt Demands: Family, Betrayal, and Precarity in a Broken System.

By Kristin Collier.

Nov. 2025. 304p. Grand Central, $30 (9781538764985); e-book (9781538765005). 378.3.

When Collier applied for a credit card as she was finishing college, she discovered that she was $200,000 in debt thanks to her mother, who had stolen her identity. This book documents her experiences with unraveling the situation and proving that she didn't take out the loans, many of which were student loans. She details the emotional and physical toll this took on her and how the stress manifested in her body at a time when debt kept her from seeing a doctor. Throughout, Collier interweaves stories from others in similar situations. She also exposes exploitative lending agencies and their unethical practices, like applying payments only to interest so borrowers never pay off the principal. After decades of effort, most of her debt was forgiven—but only after years of loan payments, police reports, handwriting experts, court dates, and bankruptcy. Since then, she has faced "zombie debt," where lenders try to collect even when courts say they cannot. She also explores her relationship with her mother and how her struggles impacted her family. Readers interested in social justice and family dynamics will find this story fascinating. —*Jennifer Adams*

Winning the Earthquake: How Jeannette Rankin Defied All Odds to Become the First Woman in Congress.

By Lorissa Rinehart.

Nov. 2025. 352p. illus. St. Martin's, $33 (9781250353047); e-book (9781250353054). 328.73.

In 1916, years before the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteed women the right to vote, Jeannette Rankin became the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress. Often remembered for being the only congressional representative to vote against the country entering WWII (she also, in her first term, voted against entering WWI), Rankin was a lifelong believer in equality, a direct-democracy activist, a pacifist, and an advocate for workers and the impoverished. Born in Montana in 1880, Rankin grew up doing the same work as men on the family ranch. After graduating from college and becoming a social worker, she joined the suffragist movement. A compelling speaker, she travelled exhaustively and honed adept organizing skills she used throughout her life. After leaving Congress, she devoted travel and work to the causes she believed in. Historian Rinehart (*First to the Front*, 2023) has written a comprehensive and clear-eyed biography of this important American figure. In a time when a dismaying number of public figures across the spectrum pursue personal and political enrichment, Rankin's courage of her convictions is inspiring. —*Laurie Unger Skinner*

Without Consent: A Landmark Trial and the Decades-Long Struggle to Make Spousal Rape a Crime.

By Sarah Weinman.

Nov. 2025. 320p. Ecco, $32 (9780063279889); e-book (9780063279902). 362.883.

While in the realm of the true crime that award-winning Weinman (*Scoundrel*, 2022) is known for, this book branches out to tell the larger story of how marital rape transformed from something private, and even expected, to something public and illegal. In 1978, few states had laws against marital rape, mostly because a woman's consent was assumed from the moment she said "I do." This same year, in Oregon, where a law did exist, Greta Rideout testified that her husband, John, had raped and beaten her in front of their two-year-old daughter. Her story created a sensation, and journalists followed the case closely as Greta and John became something like celebrities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, John was acquitted and Greta ridiculed. But their case started a wider conversation and brought marital rape into a national discussion. As several states still carried loopholes regarding marital rape laws into the 2020s, Weinman traces the long history of criminalizing spousal rape, including sections about activist Laura X and Lorena and John Bobbitt. A deeply researched, highly readable, and overall excellent work of journalism. —*Kathy Sexton*

Business

Money Together: How to Find Fairness in Your Relationship and Become an Unstoppable Financial Team.

By Heather Boneparth and Douglas Boneparth.

Oct. 2025. 320p. Harriman, $28.99 (9781804090817); e-book (9781804090824). 332.024.

Managing personal finances is stressful. Maintaining long-term relationships can cause stress as well as delight. In combination, shared financial responsibilities and resources can be downright tricky. The authors, life partners, provide structure for exploring the habits, dreams, and emotions that impact financial management. *Money Together* builds understanding and financial agreement by providing opportunities to explore personal experiences and beliefs. Couples use the included questions to launch a nonthreatening, constructive conversation leading to greater understanding and cooperation. The work contains expert interviews, anecdotes, and questions covering financial-belief systems, mistakes, individual contributions, divisions of power, and risk factors. Questions range from "how does your childhood influence your lifestyle now?" to "how confident are you in managing money?" and "what financial goals do you want to reach in the next three years?" The resulting conversations will draw out unspoken assumptions, emotions, and expectations, leading toward financial harmony. While every relationship has unique circumstances, *Money Together* offers strategies for everyone to reach greater understanding and unity. Recommended for public-library collections. —*Val Edwards*

Science

The Bear at the Bird Feeder: Why We're Seeing More Wild Animals in Our Neighborhoods and How We Can Live in Harmony with Them.

By Randi Minetor.

Nov. 2025. 230p. illus. Lyons, paper, $24.95 (9781493089499). 590.

Every day, more lands that were once wild are being taken over by human development, creating a shift in human-animal behaviors and interactions. In 14 chapters complete with wildlife photography, Minetor (*The Complete Language of Birds*, 2024) details 14 wild animals present in the contiguous U.S., from the majestic moose to misunderstood coyotes, telling of the animals' historical populations and transitioning into related challenges currently faced by humans in residential areas. Lines between wild and domestic can be blurred when people attribute human qualities to animals or begin feeding them, creating situations that in some cases could even become deadly. Minetor presents ways for mitigating the safety issues between humans and wildlife, preparing readers for potentially unpleasant encounters with practical, animal-specific lists. Her extensive research is based on prior publications, expert advice, and everyday anecdotes to ensure readers are receiving accurate information, and she encourages them to spread the knowledge they acquire among neighbors so we can all become better stewards and create a positive cohabitation with wildlife. —*Kristen Shaw*

Bird City: Adventures in New York's Urban Wilds.

By Ryan Goldberg.

Nov. 2025. 288p. Algonquin, $28 (9781643755564); e-book (9781643755588). 598.09747.

Journalist Goldberg invites readers to step beyond Times Square and pizza rats into a New York City that's a vital flyway and natural oasis for more than 400 bird species. This collection of vignettes is a jewel for birders new and old as well as for locals unaware of the natural marvels pocketed between boroughs, such as Staten Island's West Shore prairie. From placid bird walks in Green-Wood Cemetery to summer showdowns between piping plover allies and beachgoers, Goldberg weaves human and natural history, creating a mosaic of ecology, journalism, and community portraiture. He also surfaces thorny ethical questions, like whether it's okay to knowingly sacrifice thousands of migrating birds to honor the victims of the 9/11 attacks with the Tribute in Light. Seasoned birders will appreciate the focus on migration patterns, conservation efforts, and the delightful characters (and unspoken etiquette) that make up the city's energetic birding scene. Newcomers will treasure the recommended apps, blogs, and birding hotspots. Accessibly written yet rigorously reported, *Bird City* beautifully blends science and wonder. Many will raise their binoculars to Goldberg. —*Katharine Uhrich*

Every Last Fish: A Deep Dive into Everything They Do for Us and We Do to Them.

By Rose George.

Nov. 2025. 320p. Norton, $29.99 (9780393881479). 597.

George (*Nine Pints*, 2018), who won't eat fish, adventurously investigates the current plight of sea creatures and the many challenges facing fisherman globally. She participates in a diving school, spends lots of time on boats (which provokes bouts of seasickness), checks out the British fish-and-chips industry, visits a fish market in Senegal, learns about offshore wind turbines in New England, and tours a salmon farm in Norway. Important issues abound as she looks into overfishing and unsustainability, fish sentience (intelligence, the ability to feel pain), and fishing as one of the most perilous occupations in the world. While commonly consumed seafood (tuna, salmon, cod, scallops) receives appropriate attention, George concentrates on the individuals and businesses that catch fish, cook them, study them, or try to protect them. Her writing style is a composite of concerned, compassionate, colorful, and even comical. Consider her delicious description of a fish stick whose batter "clings to the fish like a desperate lover." But George's message is deadly serious as she designates human beings as "the most fearsome and successful marine predators and polluters." —*Tony Miksanek*

The Genius Bat: The Secret Life of the Only Flying Mammal.

By Yossi Yovel.

Oct. 2025. 320p. St. Martin's, $32 (9781250378446); e-book (9781250378453). 599.4.

Yovel, an ecologist, neurobiologist, and bat researcher, introduces readers to the fascinating world of bats, which are found everywhere on Earth except for the North and South Poles. The book discusses both contemporary and historical research as well as the technological advances that have occurred in the field. The sociality, echolocation, and evolution of bats are covered along with their conservation in the wild. The text is informed by Yovel's own experiences conducting research in the field as well as the lively tales shared by contemporary and historical researchers, referred to as heroes by the author. Whether it's describing a scientific rivalry or how a researcher wound up working with bats, sharing a research expedition that suffered from chronic bad luck or investigating how a bat's facial morphology impacts its echolocation signals, the tales of doing hands-on science in the field are compelling and enliven the text. In this dynamic and informative account of the genius of bats, Yovel's passion for and knowledge of the topic are inspiring and evident throughout. —*Maren Ostergard*

Heart of the Jaguar: The Extraordinary Conservation Effort to Save the Americas' Legendary Cat.

By James Campbell.

Nov. 2025. 352p. illus. Norton, $35 (9780393867619). 599.75.

Campbell (*Braving It*, 2016) has previously written books about history and survival in the Arctic. In *Heart of the Jaguar*, he crafts a narrative about not only the endangered animal of the title but also about one particular biologist who was determined to save it. Alan Rabinowitz, "the Indiana Jones of wildlife ecology" and author of multiple titles on the jaguar, fought for an international wildlife corridor to protect the animal that extends thousands of latitudinal miles. In alternating chapters, Campbell shares the history of jaguars, the largest cat in the Western Hemisphere, and Rabinowitz's often dangerous work to preserve it and its habitat. As he writes in the preface, the two men communicated for years as Campbell developed his own fascination with efforts to protect the animal. Rabinowitz's death in 2018 left a vacuum in the world of wildlife conservation, but Campbell does an outstanding job of honoring his work while echoing his travels and telling the story of the jaguar and the dedicated people, himself included, still determined to protect it. —*Colleen Mondor*

Metamorphosis: A Natural and Human History.

By Oren Harman.

Oct. 2025. 384p. Basic, $34 (9781541607606); e-book (9781541607590). 571.8.

Israeli scientist Harman (*Evolutions*, 2018) turns his multidisciplinary eye to the mystery of metamorphosis. Inspired by both *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1969) and his wife's late-middle-age pregnancy, he meditates on the science of metamorphosis ("why in the world all this wasted energy and time?") and takes a deep dive into the role of change and the art of transformation. Part One anchors the idea of variation and transmutation, from the works of ancient thinkers to the science of the seventeenth century as philosophy begins to give way to scientific exploration. Part Two picks up the story after Darwin's theory of evolution changed how perception of the world moved from fixed forms (species) to the idea of constant change, while Part Three examines not only the molecular pathways of metamorphosis but also the limits of those pathways—how is the self maintained in this state of flux? Enlivened throughout by quotations and stories following the investigation of metamorphosis, particularly in butterflies and moths, the book ends with the birth of his daughter and how we ourselves change. —*Nancy Bent*

What Sheep Think about the Weather: How to Listen to What Animals Are Trying to Say.

By Amelia Thomas.

Nov. 2025. 368p. Sourcebooks, paper, $17.99 (9781464218453). 591.59.

Many animal lovers feel that their pets communicate with them. Thomas (*The Zoo on the Road to Nablus*, 2008) embarks on a year-long project to learn listening techniques in order to understand messages from animals living on her farm. She reviews scientific research, interviews experts, and experiments with recommended procedures on her own brood with amusing results. Thomas discovers the importance of uncovering an animal's individual motivations and thought patterns to determine the best approach to conversation, keeping in mind that many types of animal communication, such as smell, play, and silences, are nonverbal. Thomas learns to trust her own intuition and feelings and observes that her adventure has increased her own awareness and introspection. She includes heartwarming and heartbreaking stories of her attempts to understand her animals alongside anecdotes of farm life. Thomas closes with lessons learned and recommendations to readers who want to connect more fully with their pets. A whimsical addition to the body of work on animal communication. —*Rebekah Kati*

Why Whales Sing.

By Eduardo Mercado.

Nov. 2025. 328p. illus. Johns Hopkins, $29.95 (9781421452890); e-book (9781421452906). 599.5.

The idea that whales "sing" is appealing on many levels. In the 1986 movie *Star Trek IV*, the singing of humpback whales even saves the world from a deadly alien probe. Yet, the purpose of these complex patterned vocalizations seems uncertain. The consensus of experts is that humpback whales' songs are primarily a mating display, but may have additional functions. Cognitive psychologist and neuroscientist Mercado makes waves with his controversial belief that these songs function chiefly as a form of long-distance sonar (echolocation), and not just as serenades. He draws upon multiple fields of study (including acoustics, behavioral science, neuroscience, and ecology) in presenting and defending his hypothesis. The biosonar ability of other animals (like bats and dolphins) is described. Details about the whales' "songs" (such as their structure and range of travel) are reviewed. Humpback whales are intelligent, possibly altruistic creatures, and experience unihemispheric sleep (half of the brain sleeps while the other half remains alert). Although female humpback whales can vocalize, singing is almost exclusively done by males. Despite Mercado's over-long case for echolocation, this is a fascinating topic. —*Tony Miksanek*

Technology

Atlas of Macroscopes: Interactive Data Visualizations.

By Katy Börner and others.

2025. 184p. illus. MIT, $39.95 (9780262049924). 001.422.

This MIT Press book introduces macroscopes, software tools that offer a big-picture view of complex data, allowing patterns to emerge that would be lost when examining individual details. Divided into three parts, the book begins by exploring the power and origins of large-scale data visualization. While the book is visually engaging and features 40 macroscopes, the real magic happens when combined with the associated website, scimaps.org. This site allows readers to interact with the visualizations as intended. Some are easily accessible, like "River Runner," which traces the path of a virtual drop of water. Others are less intuitive and require more time to grasp. The final section discusses the challenges and opportunities of collecting and rendering complex data, including how artificial intelligence can either maximize its use or mimic human biases and weaknesses. Although the book is a colorful, image-rich guide, the accompanying website provides the most rewarding experience. A recommended purchase for all libraries, this book will be most appealing for users with a strong interest in data visualization. —*Kevin McDonough*

The Body Digital: A Brief History of Humans and Machines, from Cuckoo Clocks to ChatGPT.

By Vanessa Chang.

Nov. 2025. 256p. Melville, paper, $19.99 (9781685891978); e-book (9781685891985). 609.

More than most tools, machines offer unique opportunities to extend our reach and expand our capabilities. But their use can become addictive and alter our perspective in a variety of ways. The smartphone and computer provide portals to an endless stream of data and forums for posting personal opinions and reading others' viewpoints. Google and Siri can answer almost all your questions. The smartphone and Apple Watch can surveil your vital signs and movements. Chang asserts "these devices aim to erase the boundary between our bodies and our information." The ways that technologies arise from and add to the human body are explored in chapters titled "Body," "Ear," "Eye," "Foot," "Hand," "Mind," and "Voice." Topics include cochlear implants, automata, GPS, tactile intelligence, driverless vehicles, pedometers, pianola (player piano), music boxes, photography, phonographs, satellites, creativity, AI, and virtual reality. Chang notes that we're even now existing in a "mixed reality" due to our infatuation with data and desire for diversions. An overly optimistic, thoughtful but truncated history of the ever-growing pervasiveness and influence of machines on people, culture, and society. —*Tony Miksanek*

Governing the Machine: How to Navigate the Risks of AI and Unlock Its True Potential.

By Ray Eitel-Porter and others.

Oct. 2025. 384p. Bloomsbury Business, $35 (9781399426299); e-book (9781399426275). 006.3.

In *Governing the Machine*, the authors deliver a timely and authoritative guide on managing the promises and perils of artificial intelligence. Drawing on extensive experience in industry, policy, and responsible AI initiatives, they outline a pragmatic framework for organizations seeking to balance innovation with accountability. Their work makes clear that AI governance is not a compliance checkbox but a leadership imperative, critical to sustaining trust among employees, customers, and regulators alike. The book carefully demystifies complex issues such as defining ethical principles, mitigating risk, adopting safeguards, and navigating evolving regulatory landscapes across the U.S., UK, and EU. What sets the book apart is its actionable focus, offering leaders not just conceptual understanding but also practical steps to build AI systems that are profitable, sustainable, and trustworthy. Ultimately, it will benefit business executives, policymakers, technologists, and risk managers who must align AI adoption with organizational strategy while protecting both reputation and the public good. —*Dominic J. Caraccilo*

On a Mission: The Smithsonian History of U.S. Women Astronauts.

By Valerie Neal.

Oct. 2025. 360p. illus. Smithsonian, $29.95 (9781588347763); e-book (9781588347770). 629.45.

The captivating history of space travel is highlighted through the unique lens of 61 American women in NASA. Neal, a retired curator for the National Air and Space Museum Department of Space History, compiled interviews with former astronauts, along with their official biographies, to shine a spotlight on the first female trailblazers through to current generations involved in NASA space exploration. Neal is adamant these women are not "women astronauts," a subset of the whole, but complete and capable astronauts. Managing to hold true to their points of view, Neal does address a few issues affecting women specifically, like space suit sizing and pregnancy. While the information presented is not organized intuitively—being occasionally repetitive or explaining specific roles late—Neal harnesses the awe-inspiring essence of these women who are invaluable to America's history of space. Black-and-white photography gives readers a glimpse into their extraordinary lives. Though the overall flow is a bit disjointed, space enthusiasts will be enthralled by the glamorous lives and careers of these 61 women. —*Kristen Shaw*

Child Care

Love the Teen You Have: A Practical Guide to Transforming Conflict into Connection.

By Ann-Louise Lockhart.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Flatiron, $30.99 (9781250361004); e-book (9781250361011). 649.

For this guide, Lockhart flexes her two decades of experience as a pediatric psychologist, parenting coach, and mother of two. Her main premise links unwavering support and positive communication with the promotion of emotional health, providing actionable strategies for parents of children aged 9 to 19. Lockhart modifies her advice to accommodate different personality types and cultural backgrounds, with clear steps that parents can take in a wide spectrum of situations. Each chapter is capped with a self-reflection exercise that encourages caregivers to contemplate underlying causes of conflict, habituated response patterns, and lingering negative associations from their own upbringing. Lockhart asserts that deliberate parental modelling and practicing self-care are crucial for instructing teens about emotional regulation and balance and that providing unconditional love and support can help reduce the mental distress of both parents and teens. Lockhart's approach is straightforward, research-based, and empowering. She concedes that her strategies will not work in all cases, but she reassures parents that any relationship can be improved or redeemed, regardless of how irreparable it might appear to be. —*Joelle Egan*

She's Just Spirited: Parenting a Neurodivergent Child and the Diagnosis That Changes Everything.

By Nefertiti Austin.

Oct. 2025. 216p. Bloomsbury Academic, $29.95 (9798881805555); e-book (9798881805562). 649.154.

Pediatricians' office walls and parenting websites post milestones like the average age a child smiles (three to six months) and crawls (seven to ten months). No wonder parents feel anxious when their kids follow a different time frame. Austin (*Motherhood So White*, 2019), the Black mother of a neurodivergent adopted daughter and a neurotypical adopted son, shares her hard-won wisdom. She ably fills in the gaps she sees in often jargon-laden books by psychologists, school counselors, and educators and offers personal and practical advice. Her kids, born six years apart to the same mom but with different fathers, could not be more different. August is a lacrosse-playing high-school senior on the way to college. From the time she is born six weeks premature, Cherish has followed a different path and is eventually diagnosed as having ADHD and sensory processing disorder. Austin reassures parents, advising them to trust their instincts, learn the lingo, be prepared for "haggling" with insurance companies, and to "buckle up" for the ride ahead. A personal and anecdotal, informative and useful guide. —*Karen Springen*

Health & Medicine

Healthy to 100: How Strong Social Ties Lead to Long Lives.

By Ken Stern.

Oct. 2025. 304p. PublicAffairs, $30 (9781541705012); e-book (9781541705036). 613.2.

Could working longer be a secret to aging well? Yes. Longevity expert Stern, host of the *Century Lives* podcast, convincingly argues that employment gives people social ties and a sense of purpose and delays cognitive and physical declines. When it comes to living a rewarding, healthy life, relationships matter more than anything else. Yet the West focuses on the body. Instead, the emphasis should be on trying to reduce isolation and loneliness and increasing social connections, which lessen the risk of dying at any age. In the U.S., the average life expectancy is 79, lower than in Japan, Singapore, and Spain by about six years. What's more, the average American lives twelve-and-a half years in poor health. Stern attacks the common, false assumption that "life is better in the absence of work." A job is a team sport. Stern travels to healthy-aging places like Japan, consults many studies, and basically concludes that people should stop romanticizing early retirement. Instead, they should aim for "social health." Work, volunteer, be a lifelong learner, and remember all that older people can contribute to society. —*Karen Springen*

Train Your Brain to Beat Chronic Pain: How to Harness the Power of the Mind-Body Connection.

By Carly Hunt.

Nov. 2025. 192p. Guilford, paper, $18.95 (9781462552962). 616.

Twenty percent of people suffer from chronic pain, which can be so awful that some choose to end their lives. Hunt, a psychologist, never thought about escaping her own excruciating discomfort through suicide, but shares what it feels like to be desperate for relief. As a child with a twisted intestine, she needed several feet of dead tissue surgically removed. Later, Hunt divorced herself from unhealthy things in her life, including her husband, people-pleasing, and self-criticism. She dispenses drug-free ways to relieve pain (the body's alarm system), including aiming for an "upward spiral" rather than a downward one. Hunt's recommendations: Build friendships, exercise, volunteer, avoid alcohol, join support groups, get more sleep, increase social activities, go outside, pursue meaning in life, and fight the "inner critic" with kindness and understanding. (A history of trauma is more prevalent in people with chronic pain.) She addresses psychedelics and cannabis, but is cautious, noting the lack of insurance coverage and enough research. She also shares a variety of resources. This guide provides sound and valuable advice that can improve readers' quality of life. —*Karen Springen*

Cookery

Dorie's Anytime Cakes.

By Dorie Greenspan.

Oct. 2025. 320p. illus. Harvest, $35 (9780063346963); e-book (9780063346970). 641.5.

This most recent in the delightful Greenspan's (*Baking with Dorie*, 2021) extensive recipe collection will be a fun addition for bakers who thrive on the smiles their culinary creations induce in friends and family. With the advice that "if you follow the rules, you're just about guaranteed to pull something good from the oven," Greenspan sets readers up for success. Tips on tricky elements like effectively using dried fruits and selecting the right kind of baking pans, and advanced techniques like making nut flours or expertly folding in ingredients preface the recipes, which are cleverly organized by cake shape. Colorful, whimsical, realistic illustrations of the finished products inspire, and extensive notes, tips, and suggestions for "playing around" will encourage repeat makes until the baker has crafted their perfect, signature variation. From a basic olive oil cake, to easy-to-share loaf cakes, to showier fare like Bundt cakes with glazes and adornments, this is a fun compilation that will find a wide audience. —*Heather Booth*

Sweet: The Secret to the Best Desserts.

By Alexina Anatole.

Nov. 2025. 240p. illus. Interlink, $35 (9781623715878). 641.8.

Anatole's follow-up to *Bitter* (2025) centers around a (presumably) fan favorite in the flavor category: sugar. But this tome quickly leads back to the point made by Anatole's first book, which is that the appeal and sophistication of cleverly composed desserts lies in the contrasting flavors they are made with, including bitterness. Rum and grapefruit-soaked babas and a cardamom brioche loaf are two among these, both plays on traditional European yeasted-dough classics that are given the twist of citrus or spice add-ons. Brown sugar, bananas/plantains, strawberries, coconut, peaches, vanilla, and honey are some of the sweet all-natural "stars" around which chapters revolve, but it's the bitter, sour, salty, and umami that

Continued on p.14

Focus on Crafts & Gardening

Art from *Embroidering Life*.

The Contemporary Cottage Garden: Climate-Friendly, Mindful Methods for Growing Flowers and Food.

By Pamela Hubbard.

Feb. 2026. 256p. illus. Timber, paper, $27.99 (9781643263755); e-book (9781643265933). 635.9.

Hubbard is a Briton by birth who's settled in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, where, inspired by the English landscapes of her childhood, she's created her own cottage garden, applying these criteria: dense plantings, an informal plan, a mix of plant types, wide and curvy borders, a "riot" of color, potted plants, an enclosed space, meandering paths, vertical features, and little or no lawn. With an informality matching the cottage-garden style, Hubbard lays out a sensible process for planning and creating a cottage garden, including siting, choosing plants, weeding, irrigation, and mulching. She effectively frames the cottage garden as a way to address climate change and the ensuing loss of pollinators, to grow food, to grow flowers, to entice kids to become lifelong gardeners, and overall, to ease stress through fragrance, color, sound, and touch. Throughout, photos of plants are smartly positioned near their mentions on the page. While many of her plant choices are best suited for the Poconos, many can also be planted elsewhere; in addition, experienced gardeners should be able to sort out the "right plant, right place" themselves. A newbie-friendly introduction to the wonderfully multifunctional cottage garden. *—Alan Moores*

The Crochet Stitch Companion for Blankets and Afghans.

By Anna Nikipirowicz.

Dec. 2025. 176p. illus. Search, paper, $25.95 (9781800922938). 746.434.

If a crocheted blanket brings to mind either a simple pastel baby blanket or a multicolored granny-square extravaganza, this compendium of patterns, motifs, and edge trim will change that. Vibrant colors, clever patterns, complex construction, and visually appealing blankets will delight and encourage yarnwork enthusiasts to push past traditional techniques into fresh and modern works. Nikipirowicz is a well-known crochet and knit pattern designer based in the UK but popular worldwide. As such, a DK-weight yarn produced in the UK but available in the U.S. is used in all of the patterns, both English and American crochet terms are used, and metric measurements are converted. Basic techniques and specific stitches are explained in an appendix, but the book will be best used by crocheters with moderate knowledge of crochet techniques and terms looking to expand their stitch repertoire, including the ability to read both charts and patterns. A great purchase for collections popular with crafters looking to shake up their skill sets with modern style. *—Heather Booth*

Embroidering Life: Stitching Patterns and Projects for Every Season.

By Yumiko Higuchi.

Dec. 2025. 104p. Roost, paper, $21.95 (9781645474104). 746.44.

In her latest craft book, Higuchi (*Embroidered Animals*, 2021) offers dozens of charming embroidery patterns themed around seasonal blooms and motifs. Readers are given a year's worth of projects, which take inspiration from everyday life as well as from Japanese flora. The patterns are gorgeous and simple; most of them make use of the same handful of stitches, giving crafters ample opportunity to practice each technique. However, the book may work better as a reference than a how-to guide for the true novice. Although there are diagrams explaining how to work each stitch in the beginning chapters, the projects themselves don't have process photos. It may be hard at first for a reader to visualize how to work on a pattern. But it's an excellent choice for both advanced beginners and intermediate embroiderers looking to inject some whimsy into their work. And it's sure to become a treasured and well-used resource for those exploring the craft. *—Zeja Z. Copes*

Felt Craft Fun: 16 Adorable Kawaii-Style Projects to Stitch, Share, and Love All Year Long.

By Jessica DeVos.

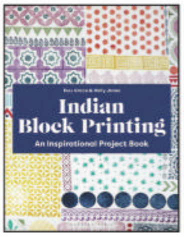
Nov. 2025. 160p. illus. Schiffer, paper, $22.99 (9780764370052). 746.

As Devos says in her introduction, "I think everything looks much cuter with a little face on it," and she goes on to prove she's right with 16 felt-appliqué patterns in the popular kawaii style. There is no limit to the cuteness, from the natural (flowers, mushroom terrarium) and the supernatural (UFO, mermaid) to food (burger and fries, taco truck) and seasonal designs (Grim Reaper, tree farm). The book is suitable for beginners, as Devos addresses the pros and cons of different kinds of felt and embroidery basics with plenty of pictures that walk crafters through the running stitch, whipped backstitch, couching stitch, and more. The first project is a shooting-star sampler that will use all the newfound skills, and other projects are labelled by three skill levels. Every pattern also includes tips on getting kids involved. There are perforated templates at the back of the book that library staff may want to photocopy before circulating, but Devos also includes a download link. Newbies and needle crafters looking to expand their repertoire will enjoy these supercute felt-appliqué patterns. *—Susan Maguire*

★ Indian Block Printing: An Inspirational Project Book.

By Holly Jones and Tess Grace.

Oct. 2025. 144p. illus. Bloomsbury/Herbert, paper, $25 (9781789943412). 761.209.



Look no further for a well-photographed, step-by-step crafts book, rich with extensive information about the origins and artisans behind it, than this best-of-its-kind guide to Indian block printing. Crafters and coauthors Jones and Grace, based in the Cotswolds, co-own a studio-workshop called Indian Block Print Co. and routinely travel to Jaipur and its outskirts. Their detailed sidebars are especially eye-catching—photographic essays about Indian experts in Bagru, the process of natural dye printing, the history of women block carvers—while their strong emphasis on the how-tos themselves will help inspiration become reality. Close-up photographs of the carved blocks used are featured in each of the 15 projects, from a tote bag and tablecloth to printed cards and gift wrap. The authors' well-explained tips—insert a piece of scrap paper inside the tote bag to ensure printmaking is pristine; print on the rough (not the smooth) side of the paper stationery; mastering the art of random printing—just might make the difference in readers' finished pieces too. True advocates of their craft, the authors also include an inspiring photo gallery and list of resources. —*Barbara Jacobs*

Landscape Rug Hooking: A Painterly Approach to Creating the Landscapes You Love.

By Deanne Fitzpatrick.

Nov. 2025. 144p. Schiffer, $34.99 (9780764370014); e-book (9781507306291). 746.7.

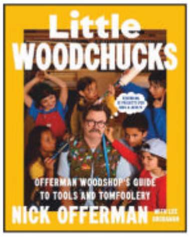
For crafters seeking both guidance and inspiration, Fitzpatrick offers this detailed and inviting look into the world of rug hooking. Rooted in North American tradition, this fiber art is presented as an intuitive practice that values process and personal expression over rigid planning. Even imperfect projects contribute to growth, Fitzpatrick emphasizes, reassuring beginners that a finished piece itself will teach new lessons and that experimentation with color and form is central to progress. Organized to support both learning and creativity, the book begins with discussions of materials like burlap, linen, and wool, explaining how each will affect the look and texture of a rug. Full-color photographs, often spanning entire pages, vividly illustrate landscapes translated into fiber, capturing movement, light, and atmosphere. Detailed captions describe artistic decisions, providing insight into technique while reinforcing the message that design choices need not be intimidating. With prompts, a glossary of design terms, and straightforward tips for getting started, this guide positions rug hooking as accessible, forgiving, and deeply rewarding. Collections emphasizing fiber arts, creativity, or hands-on learning will find this a strong addition. —*Sarah Myers*

★ Little Woodchucks: Offerman Woodshop's Guide to Tools and Tomfoolery.

By Nick Offerman and Lee Buchanan.

Oct. 2025. 208p. illus. Dutton, $35 (9780593475263); e-book (9780593475270). 684.08.

From popular actor and author Offerman (*Where the Deer and the Antelope Play*, 2021) and his lifelong woodshop comrade Buchanan comes an irresistible invitation to children and families to learn the art of woodworking. Twelve simple, appealing projects guide children ages six to ten and their grown-ups through learning the foundations of this time-honored craft. Step-by-step instructions with plenty of photographs and an emphasis on adult involvement and supervision help kids build skills that go beyond the woodshop, like problem-solving, creativity, resourcefulness, and respect for tools, materials, and safety. Whether it's a box kite, a set of toast tongs, a hand-carved animal, a toolbox, a bench, or another practical, fun project, the learning process takes the upper hand over perfect results, and Offerman's upbeat coaching and advice—featuring his trademark dry, irreverent humor—take perfectionism and any fear of making mistakes out of the picture. Perfect for families who are seeking fun new ways to get away from screens and build something together with their own hands. —*Jane Harper*



Needle Felting Art: 12 Mixed-Media Woodland Projects to Paint and Sew.

By Jo Lochhead.

Nov. 2025. 128p. illus. Search, paper, $24.95 (9781800923317). 746.04.

In this guide, Lochhead, crafter and founder of the Crafty Kit Company, teaches needle felting, the art of shaping wool by poking it with a needle, then adding painted and sewn elements. Alongside photos, Lochhead explains the tools readers will need. There are also illustrations of her explanations for using stencils and templates and doing basic stitches like straight stitch, French knot, and back stitch. This straightforward book doesn't dive too deeply into the history of needle felting or the selection of materials, which will make it easy for beginners to pick it up and get started on projects such as Red Squirrel, a scene featuring a needle-felted red squirrel surrounded by fresh pine cones that readers are encouraged to forage for themselves, really bringing their project to life. Ideal for beginners, this book is recommended for artistic and crafty readers who also enjoy nature. —*Nataya Culler*

The Self-Fed Farm and Garden: A Return to the Roots of the Organic Method.

By Eliot Coleman.

Nov. 2025. 208p. Chelsea Green, $29.95 (9781645023067); e-book (9781645023074). 631.584.

Coleman, now 86, here returns to the organic-gardening concepts he advanced 36 years ago in his seminal *The New Organic Grower*, but he focuses less on home or "market" gardening and more on larger-scale farming. Those concepts can still seem radical today—for example, optimizing on-site resources (like green manures) instead of "purchased inputs" (like commercial fertilizers); the notion of pests as an indicator rather than a cause of stress in a plant; no-till growing. Since Coleman only addresses home gardening directly in a five-page section near the end of the book, his earlier title, especially the thirtieth-anniversary edition, will serve as the more complete source for home gardeners. For farmers, this slim volume will offer helpful advice on such topics as light tilling using heavier machinery and the use of movable greenhouses for larger acreage. Thus, for the home gardener, *The Self-Fed Farm and Garden* will be a complement to, rather than a replacement for, Coleman's *The New Organic Grower.* —*Alan Moores*

This Is for You: Gift Giving as a Way of Life.

By Lea Redmond.

Oct. 2025. 288p. illus. HarperOne, $26 (9780063283718); e-book (9780063283725). 740.

Multidisciplinary creator Redmond pens a compelling explanation of gift giving illustrated by her charming line drawings. First, she offers useful and clarifying definitions of *gift*: "doing someone a good turn *on purpose* and *with a purpose*"; "an offering transferred willingly from one entity to another without the expectation of receiving anything in return." Then she delves into the reasons for gifting and the fact that *gift* is a relationship verb, before listing a variety of ways to create a special, personalized gift, including low- and no-cost items. She states upfront that this is not an etiquette book, but it does delve into matters like how to handle an unwanted present graciously. Her ideas are abundant, such as using earth-conscious wrapping options, thinking of the envelope as a canvas, and gathering a toolbox for creativity with her 16 tips. Chapters close with lists of questions for reflection, and Redmond invites readers to send her a gifting story at book's end. As Redmond shows, if it's a gift to be simple, it can also be simple to gift. —*Barbara Jacobs*

Weaving with Paper: 30 Projects to Expand Your Creativity with Inventive Techniques, Intriguing Prompts, and Inspiring Works of Art.

By Helen Hiebert.

Dec. 2025. 224p. Storey, paper, $24.99 (9781635867961); e-book (9781635868197). 745.

This might be the ultimate craft for both recycling *and* saving money. An expert in artfully crafting with paper, Hiebert (*The Art of Papercraft*, 2022, and several other how-to books) goes to the next level here, exploring the interlacing of papers (and textiles and even sandpaper). She helps ensure a good foundation by first going into the rudiments of weaving and design, such as developing a design eye, learning how to cut, weave, and secure strips, and thinking about shape, typography, balance, contrast—the elements that comprise art. Her 30 projects, aptly named in one or two words, are experiments in techniques and decorative prompts (such as puzzle, world, joy, silhouette). Every one features expected info like techniques, warp and weft information, materials needed, and instructions.Those who seek practical applications will find a handful of how-tos at book's end: note cards, paper lanterns, reverse piano-hinge albums. She also includes a showcase of eight artists, a glossary, a metric conversion chart, resources, and suggested reading. —*Barbara Jacobs*

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make Anatole's recipes more interesting. A vanilla tart is doctored up with sour green apple and the herbal aroma of basil. Banana sesame soufflé pancakes turn weekend mornings into an exotic and bittersweet affair. Recipe pairings are thought-provoking and will be appreciated by creative and advanced bakers who aim to impress with their sophisticated knowledge of flavors that make a bake more than just sweet. —*Jessica S. Levy*

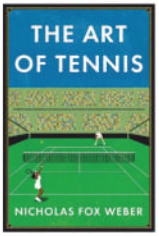
Sports & Recreation

The Art of Tennis.

By Nicholas Fox Weber.

Nov. 2025. 400p. illus. Godine, $40 (9781567928310); e-book (9781567928327). 796.342.

Weber (*Mondrian*, 2024) is a stellar arts biographer, and he is passionate about tennis. Noting that sport "is one of the greatest pastimes known to humankind," he looks to art that affirms this, citing paintings and literature inspired by tennis. He also portrays artistic players who have competed on clay and grass courts worldwide. The opening chapter, "Charisma," sets the baseline for the following 24 chapters that showcase the far-reaching influence of tennis, whether on the creations of legendary fashion designers (René Lacoste, Oleg Cassini), dance (*Jeux* by Claude Debussy), pioneering motion-photography (Eadweard Muybridge), sculpture (Alexander Calder), or literature (Vladimir Nabokov). Weber also covers such topics as debates over the color of tennis balls and the history of the Fabergé tennis trophy. Just as a slice shot can change the flow of a set, the book concludes with a heartfelt essay in honor of Weber's dear friend Nick Ohly, who died unexpectedly on the tennis court while they were playing a tiebreaker. Each finely crafted chapter could be a stand-alone essay and all are certain to entertain and educate tennis fans along with readers drawn to sports and art history. A captivating and intellectual breath of fresh air in contrast to conventional sports writing. —*Brenda Barrera*



Just Call Me "Andi": Sports Stories from a Trailblazer.

By Andria Petrillo.

Oct. 2025. 260p. ECW, paper, $19.95 (9781770417939); e-book (9781778524783). 796.

Canadian sports broadcaster Andria "Andi" Petrillo grew up playing multiple sports and translated her passion into a successful career. She has broken plenty of barriers in this male-dominated profession, and has the resume to prove it: first Canadian woman on the in-studio team for CBC's Hockey Night in Canada, first Canadian woman to host a daily sports radio talk show, host for Canadian Olympic/Paralympic coverage, and most recently, host for CBC's broadcast of the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL). This memoir has universal appeal for sports fans (young and old alike) who will find her gifted storytelling and candor refreshing. Petrillo shares memorable encounters with sports figures, including icons like Bobby Orr and Billie Jean King, along with entertaining behind-the-scenes insights. No topic is left off the table, including locker rooms, pets, heritage, and dress code. She shares some advice too: if you want a real, honest opinion about your work, ask your boss, not social media. A humorous, reflective sports memoir about pursuing your dreams while making progress toward gender equality that garners a high recommendation. —*Brenda Barrera*

YA: *Readers will find this beloved Canadian sportscaster relatable as she defied odds to pursue a sports career. She shares her journey and presents sage advice without lecturing. BB.*

A League of His Own: A. G. Spalding and the Business of Baseball.

By Mark A. Stein.

Jan. 2026. 400p. illus. Lyons, $39.95 (9781493077656); e-book (9781493090860). 796.357.

Having costarred in Jeffrey Orens' fine history of pro baseball's earliest days, *Selling Baseball* (2025), Albert Spalding here takes center stage as cofounder, with William Hulbert, of the National League in 1876; a cofounder that same year, with his brother Walter, of a modest Chicago shop that would become, in his lifetime, the goliath of America's sporting-goods industry; a team owner of vast power and influence; and, an afterthought now, the premier baseball attraction of his day. For example, his pitching stats for his champion 1876 Chicago White Stockings: 47-12, 1.75 ERA, 53 complete games, 528 innings pitched. If Spalding's story begins modestly in a log cabin in tiny Byron, Illinois, its unfolding will resonate with modern-day readers: the performer who synergizes his talent to create multiple sources of income, plays the press for fools, beats the competition by simply buying them out, "hyperbolizes" the truth, and as a team owner, absolutely throttles players' ability to simply change teams and negotiate their own contracts. A long-overdue accounting of one of baseball's seminal figures. —*Alan Moores*

Let Me Be Real with You: Inspiring Lessons on Living a Life of Service.

By Arshay Cooper.

Oct. 2025. 240p. HarperOne, $26 (9780063426566); e-book (9780063426580). 796.07.

Cooper's book, *A Most Beautiful Thing* (2020), which also became a documentary film, chronicled his participation in the first all-Black U.S. high-school rowing team, first as a member and later as the team's captain. But Cooper's life involves much more than the events chronicled in that story. He experienced childhood trauma, with an absentee father, a mother who struggled with addiction, and constant bullying from classmates. Attempting to reach him, Cooper's high-school principal recommended sports as an outlet, and rowing became Cooper's métier, followed by public speaking and community service. But despite his success and his selflessness, Cooper had ignored his own pain for too long, and he was hurting. He needed time to look inward and heal himself. Sincere and uplifting, *Let Me Be Real with You* explores how Cooper evolved from a struggling youth to an exemplary member of the global community. Readers will appreciate how Cooper's eight elements of wellness—including mental, physical, and vocational wellness, which he thoroughly explains—helped his life and could aid others. —*Philip Zozzaro*

The Orvis Quick-Start Guide to Fly-Fishing: Everything You Need to Know to Catch Fish Your First Time Out.

By Philip Monahan.

Nov. 2025. 200p. illus. Lyons, paper, $29.95 (9781493036486). 799.1.

Author, editor, and fishing guide Monahan's latest book is a highly readable, well-organized, and generously illustrated how-to guide for beginning fly-fishers. He offers a syllabus, including guidance on every fly-fishing element so the angler can move quickly and confidently to the most important angling test of all—pursuing trout, bass, and panfish in flowing and still waters. Monahan's text is noteworthy for being easily understandable, demystifying the sport, and guiding readers with many subheads—much advice appears under "quick tips" headings. Nearly 150 vivid color photographs support the text and although many casting photographs did not seem to have enough contrast to see the position of the fly line, readers can visit one of the websites in Monahan's bibliography for casting instruction. While this book is an Orvis project, Monahan's tackle advice applies to gear sold by any company. Podcast references in Monahan's bibliography and his eloquent invitation to anglers to become conservation activists make this guide to an ancient sport solidly contemporary. Monahan's target audience is beginners, but his many practical tips will also help intermediate and expert anglers fish better. —*John Rowen*

The Running Ground: A Father, a Son, and the Simplest of Sports.

By Nicholas Thompson.

Oct. 2025. 272p. Random, $30 (9780593244128); e-book (9780593244135). 796.42.

Thompson had a fraught relationship with his father, Willard, a brilliant, depressive alcoholic who spent most of his life running from failed relationships and financial ruin. When the author was with his father, he would find himself surrounded by chaos and instability. Despite this, Thompson found many things to love and admire about his father, especially running, the one thing they shared. When Willard dies, Thompson starts to reflect on his relationship with his father as well as with the other runners who have helped him along the way. This book is the culmination of those findings and an homage to the "simplest of sports." Thompson, CEO of *The Atlantic*, does an excellent job of describing the hard work and dedication running requires and the toll it can take on personal relationships. Some readers may wish he would acknowledge his privilege in being able to spend so much of his life dedicated to running, but the universal theme of fathers and sons will resonate with most readers. —*Stephanie Howes*

Literature

Beard: A Memoir of a Marriage.

By Kelly Foster Lundquist.

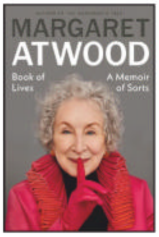
Oct. 2025. 250p. Eerdmans, $28.99 (9780802884732);
e-book (9781467469029). 810.

When the author met Devin at a church camp, sparks flew. Between their questions about God and their love of Tori Amos, friendship grew into love, then marriage. But with one big obstacle: Devin was a closeted gay man, and neither party was ready to accept this fact or what it would mean in their worlds. Twenty years after their divorce, Lundquist writes an honest look at the trope of the "beard," who, as a straight woman in a relationship with a gay man, is often viewed as a fool in her role. Lundquist begins her tale with humor regarding how her husband's sexuality and infidelity were fully revealed to her, but the overall story is far more complex. She reflects on her time with her husband with both empathy and anger as she comes to terms with the damage done to them both by being forced into gender roles. The scene where she is preparing to spend Halloween dressed as Liza Minnelli is particularly poignant. An enjoyable and compassionate memoir. —*Elizabeth Reiser*

★ Book of Lives: A Memoir of Sorts.

By Margaret Atwood.

Nov. 2025. 624p. illus. Doubleday, $35 (9780385547512);
e-book (9780385547536). 818.



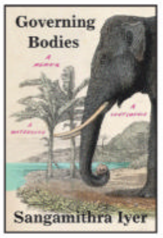
Atwood's zestfully detailed autobiography is an encompassing, surprising, and entertaining mix of vivid memories, keen and witty commentary, and slices of Canadian history. Virtuoso, protean, forthright, and astute, Atwood tells eye-widening tales of her childhood sojourns deep in the northern forests, where first her family lived in tents, then in cabins and houses built by her entomologist father, while her spirited mother kept them clothed and fed. But they also had city lives, and the contrasts between these realms has always stoked Atwood's imagination, passion for the living world, ingenuity, and fruitfulness. She began writing early, her fulsome creativity and humor already evident. Atwood charts her experiences in a school-grade by school-grade, book-by-book narrative tracking her growth from an intrepid and precocious child to a prankish young woman, gifted poet, Harvard graduate student, and prescient and provocative novelist fending off the intrusions of fame while making meaningful use of the spotlight to advocate for nature and human rights. Atwood's brimming memoir is electric with portraits of family, friends, beaux, and foes as well as revelations regarding the inspirations for her work, global adventures, and public personas for better and worse. Atwood has created a keystone source for biographers and scholars while delighting and enlightening readers curious about the life of the author of *Cat's Eye*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Blind Assassin*, *Oryx and Crake*, and so many more. —*Donna Seaman*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Atwood is one of the world's most significant writers and her capacious memoir deeply illuminates her life and work just as *The Handmaid's Tale* reaches its fortieth anniversary.

★ Governing Bodies: A Memoir, a Confluence, a Watershed.

By Sangamithra Iyer.

Nov. 2025. 416p. Milkweed, $28 (9781571313935). 810.



In this evocative and whip-smart memoir, Iyer explores the lives of her much-admired father and grandfather. Begun in the months after her father's death as a way of dealing with her immense grief, the book spools out into a report of her search for a better understanding of herself and her drive to recognize the interconnectedness of all living creatures on the planet. Her work as a water engineer, which echoes that of her grandfather, drives her to research his past projects in Burma (now Myanmar) and India. She studies the movement of water—its cultural, economic, and geographic power—and writes about her work on various projects to increase access to and protect waterways. Somehow, in what begins as a book about family and engineering, Iyer beautifully interweaves her lifelong desire to protect animals, discussing her volunteer work with endangered and imperiled species in Cameroon and other locations. The picture she creates of her life as a granddaughter and daughter, a wife dealing with infertility, and someone determined to both live in the world and save it makes for a powerful reading experience. Iyer is a passionate and thoughtful writer, and *Governing Bodies* provides a crucial voice in a time of increasing peril. —*Colleen Mondor*

The Heart-Shaped Tin: Love, Loss, and Kitchen Objects.

By Bee Wilson.

Nov. 2025. 304p. illus. Norton, $31.99 (9781324079248).
810.

In this evocative memoir, British food writer and *Wall Street Journal* "Table Talk" columnist Wilson (*The Secret of Cooking*, 2023) reflects on two life-changing events: her husband of 24 years blindsiding her with a request for a divorce, and the slow letting-go of her mother to memory loss. Wilson crafts her anecdotal, insightful essays around everyday household items that trigger unexpected, poignant emotions and memories. A unique utensil, favorite pot, or cluttered kitchen cabinet, for instance, might lead her to address such broad-ranging topics as social histories of dining conventions, business profiles of venerated enterprises like Royal Doulton and Wedgwood, junk drawers and hoarding, paper cup and plastic straw environmental waste, casserole protests, celebrity chefs and influencers, or Queen Elizabeth I. Wilson creates fond portraits of friends and family members, weaving in favorite meals, cultural delicacies, and individual food peccadilloes. Her first-person narrative shifts in the penultimate chapter when she begins to directly address her comments to "You," a new, healing presence in her life. Readers will appreciate this engaging and thoughtful treat. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Incompleteness: New and Selected Essays.

By Amit Chaudhuri.

Nov. 2025. 376p. NYRB, paper, $22.95 (9781681379654);
e-book (9781681379661). 808.84.

Chaudhuri has published novels, essays, poems, and works resistant to genre constraints. He is also a recording artist. Consequently, this collection spanning 25 years includes a remarkable variety of subjects and is written in a variety of styles, from the personal to the academic. "The Origins of Dislike," "The Piazza and the Car Park," "Poetry and Polemic," to name just three, should be required reading for anyone wishing to understand market forces on literary life and culture. Rabindranath Tagore is central to this collection, and to the twentieth-century book culture, but not for obvious reasons. Here are pieces about Joni Mitchell and an account of wandering in Brooklyn in search of Neil Diamond's house. If Chaudhuri was dispensing sage advice, when accounting for a moment of distraction he might be telling us how to live: "One is so often at the threshold of another life but chooses to retain, in a moment of wakefulness, what one takes to be one's identity." Chaudhuri is skeptical, alert, often trenchant, allergic to cant but occasionally taken with jargon in this lucid, surprising, and illuminating collection. —*Michael Autrey*

Continued on p.20

Booklist

Fall Travel Guides, 2025

by Annie Bostrom

Art from *Comfort in the Wild.*

Time to highlight upcoming standalone travel titles and series guides. The books below, all publishing between now and Spring 2026, include first-of-their-kind books, updated references, and many new and revised destination guides that will enable you to replace popular, dog-eared classics.

100 Hikes of a Lifetime U.S.A.: The Country's Ultimate Scenic Trails. By Stephanie Pearson. National Geographic, $40 (9781426224867).

After doing a world-wide version of this title, National Geographic zeros in on the U.S. with their signature photographs of each hike, along with pertinent information regarding trail length, difficulty, and resting spots, as well as nearby accommodations.

Adirondack Spring. By Brian J. Heinz. Globe Pequot/ North Country, $19.95 (9781493092758).

Illustrated by artist Michelle Gerlock, Adirondacks-based author Heinz's peaceful musing on springtime in the area is a perfect slice of seasonal armchair travel.

Amazon: A River's Journey from the Andes to the Atlantic. By Thomas Peschak. National Geographic, $50 (9781426224454).

Peschak traces his expedition across all 4,000 miles of the Amazon, with his stunning photographs of wildlife and landscapes illustrating the journey.

Comfort in the Wild: 100+ Idyllic Nature Destinations, No Roughing It Required. By Jane Wooldridge. Frommer's, $35 (9781628876390).

From jungles to the Arctic, deserts, and farmlands, Wooldridge introduces must-see nature destinations that don't require camping.

The Complete Guide to the National Park Lodges. By David L. Scott and Kay W. Scott. Globe Pequot, $24.95 (9781493088829).

This updated edition of the one-of-a-kind guide includes 175 photographs and all the specifics on American National Park lodges for those planning a visit and those who just want to see these storied places.

Europe by Eurail 2026: Touring Europe by Train. Globe Pequot, $27.95 (9781493093168).

Now in its fiftieth edition, this indispensable guide is a must for all travelers exploring Europe by train.

Extraordinary Islands: An Atlas of Unlikely Places. By Alastair Bonnett. Quarto/Ivy, $28 (9781836005773).

Bonnett catalogs 29 islands that "defy expectations," from the tiny Ethiopian island purported to hold the Ark of the Covenant to an artificial island off the coast of China, in interesting profiles that include illustrations.

Eyewitness (DK)

- **Barcelona and Catalonia.** $21.99 (9780241784037).
- **Brazil.** $29.99 (9780241757567).
- **Chile and Easter Island.** $27.99 (9780241756805).
- **Florida.** $24.99 (9780241757598).
- **Great Britain. $29.99** (9780241783740).
- **Greece, Athens and the Mainland.** $24.99 (9780241784228).
- **Japan.** $27.99 (9780241738795).
- **Malaysia and Singapore.** $27.99 (9780241756195).
- **New Orleans.** $24.99 (9780241783733).
- **Peru.** $27.99 (9780241756201).
- **Route 66:** A Tribute to an American Icon. $30 (9780241784747).
- **San Francisco and the Bay Area.** $21.99 (9780241784075).
- **Seville and Andalucia.** $22.99 (9780241784136).
- **Sicily.** $22.99 (9780241784259).
- **South Korea.** $27.99 (9780241733271).
- **Spain.** $27.99 (9780241784273).
- **Sri Lanka.** $27.99 (9780241756218).
- **Switzerland.** $24.99 (9780241784303).
- **Thailand.** $29.99 (9780241757604).
- **Ultimate Japan:** 100 Must-Do Experiences for the Trip of a Lifetime. $35 (9798217126729).

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DK
TOP 10
PHUKET
TOP 10 LISTS FOR YOUR PERFECT TRIP

Top 10

- **Andalucia and the Costa Del Sol.** $16.99 (9780241781586).
- **Budapest.** $16.99 (9780241783306).
- **Cancun and the Yucatan.** $16.99 (9780241757475).
- **Chicago.** $16.99 (9780241783313).
- **Cornwall and Devon.** $16.99 (9780241781579).
- **Cyprus.** $16.99 (9780241783412).
- **Dubai and Abu Dhabi.** $16.99 (9780241757550).

- **Greek Islands.** $16.99 (9780241783429).
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- **Madeira.** $16.99 (9780241756232).
- **Miami and the Keys.** $16.99 (9780241757611).
- **New Orleans.** $16.99 (9780241781517).
- **Phuket.** $16.99 (9780241757642).
- **Provence and the Cote D’Azur.** $16.99 (9780241783337).
- **Valencia.** $16.99 (9780241783320).
- **Vancouver and Vancouver Island.** $16.99 (9780241783719).

Spanish language
- **Bella Italia (the Italian Way):** Un viaje a traves de la cultura, el arte, los paisajes y la gastronomia. $25 (9798217135455).

FALCONGUIDES
FORAGING
California
ROCKHOUNDING
Montana

Falcon Guides (Globe Pequot)
- **Foraging California:** Finding, Identifying, and Preparing Edible Wild Foods in California. $24.95 (9781493084203).
- **Hiking North Florida and the Panhandle:** A Guide to the Area’s Greatest Hiking Adventures. $22.95 (9781493087907).
- **Hiking the San Francisco Bay Area:** A Guide to the Bay Area’s Greatest Hiking Adventures. $22.95 (9781493071722).
- **Hiking Southern California’s Desert Parks**: Featuring Anza-Borrego, Joshua Tree, Death Valley, and the Mojave Preserve. $24.95 (9781493087945).
- **Nutrition for Outdoor Recreation.** $26.95 (9781493090693).
- **Paddling the Texas Coast:** Kayak, Canoe, and Stand-Up Paddle the Best of the Texas Shoreline. $19.95 (9781493059119).
- **Rockhounding Montana:** A Guide to 100 of Montana’s Best Rockhounding Sites. $24.95 (9781493088805).
- **Scenic Driving Indiana:** Including Brown County, Bloomington, and the Whitewater Valley. $24.95 (9781493089031).
- **Scenic Driving Washington:** Including Mt. Rainier National Park, Mt. Baker, Moran State Park, and Deception Pass State Park. $26.95 (9781493089871).
- **Surviving the Trail:** Five Essential Skills to Prepare Every Hiker for Adventure’s Most Common Perils. $19.95 (9781493090129).

Fodor’s
- **Belize:** With a Side Trip to Guatemala. $21.99 (9781640978720).
- **Bermuda.** $21.99 (9781640978614).
- **Best of Italy:** With Rome, Florence, Venice & the Top Spots in Between. $22.99 (9781640978751).
- **California:** With the Best Road Trips. $26.99 (9781640978621).
- **The Complete Guide to African Safaris**: With South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Victoria Falls. $30.99 (9781640978584).
- **Florida.** $26.99 (9781640978461).
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- **South Florida:** With Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and the Keys. $21.99 (9781640978058).
- **Toronto:** With Niagara Falls and the Niagara Wine Region. $21.99 (9781640978638).

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- **Rome, Florence, and Venice 2026.** $23.95 (9781628876475).

Lonely Planet
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- **Pacific Northwest.** $26.99 (9781837583157).
- **Provence and the Cote d'Azur.** $26.99 (9781837584260).
- **US and British Virgin Islands.** $24.99 (9781837586813).

The Music Lover's Guide to North America: Museums, Historical Sites, and Other Points of Interest. By Josephine Matyas and Craig Jones. Backbeat, $26.95 (9781493089635).

The first of its kind, this guide to musical destinations in Canada and the U.S. includes both practical information for visiting and fascinating history.

North Carolina Day Hiking for Every Body: What to Know and Where to Go from the Blue Ridge to the Beaches. By Whitney Harris Wallace. McFarland, $25 (9781476697253).

While focusing on North Carolina hiking destinations, this book is also a useful guide for anyone who doesn't see themselves as a "typical" hiker, with tips for varying abilities and experience levels.

Small Towns U.S.A.: 100 Must-See Getaways Across the United States. By Brenna Darling. National Geographic, $40 (9781426223891).

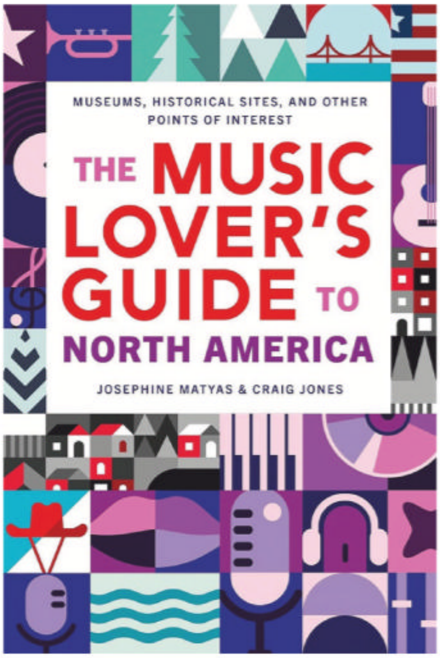
Big cities aren't everyone's thing. Darling offers 100 captivating small-town U.S. travel destinations from coast to coast.

The Traveler's Atlas of the World. National Geographic, $65 (9781426223549).

"The ultimate traveler's reference," featuring countless photographs and 250 maps, will add destinations to bucket lists everywhere.

Ultimate Guide to the National Parks: A Complete Tour of All 63 U.S. Parks. National Geographic, $30 (9781426223389).

In over 700-plus pages, the team at National Geographic tells future travelers (and armchair travelers!) everything they need to know about visiting our national parks.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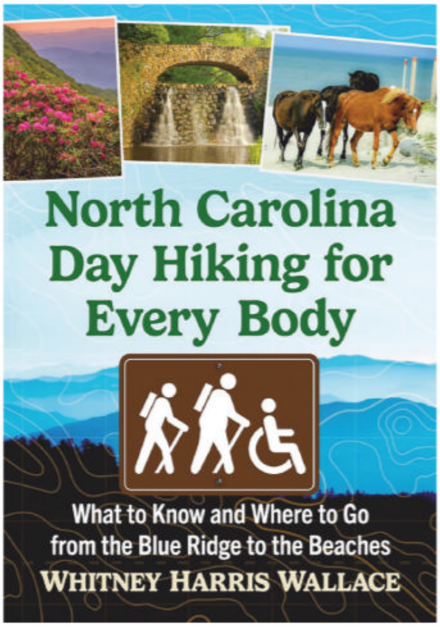
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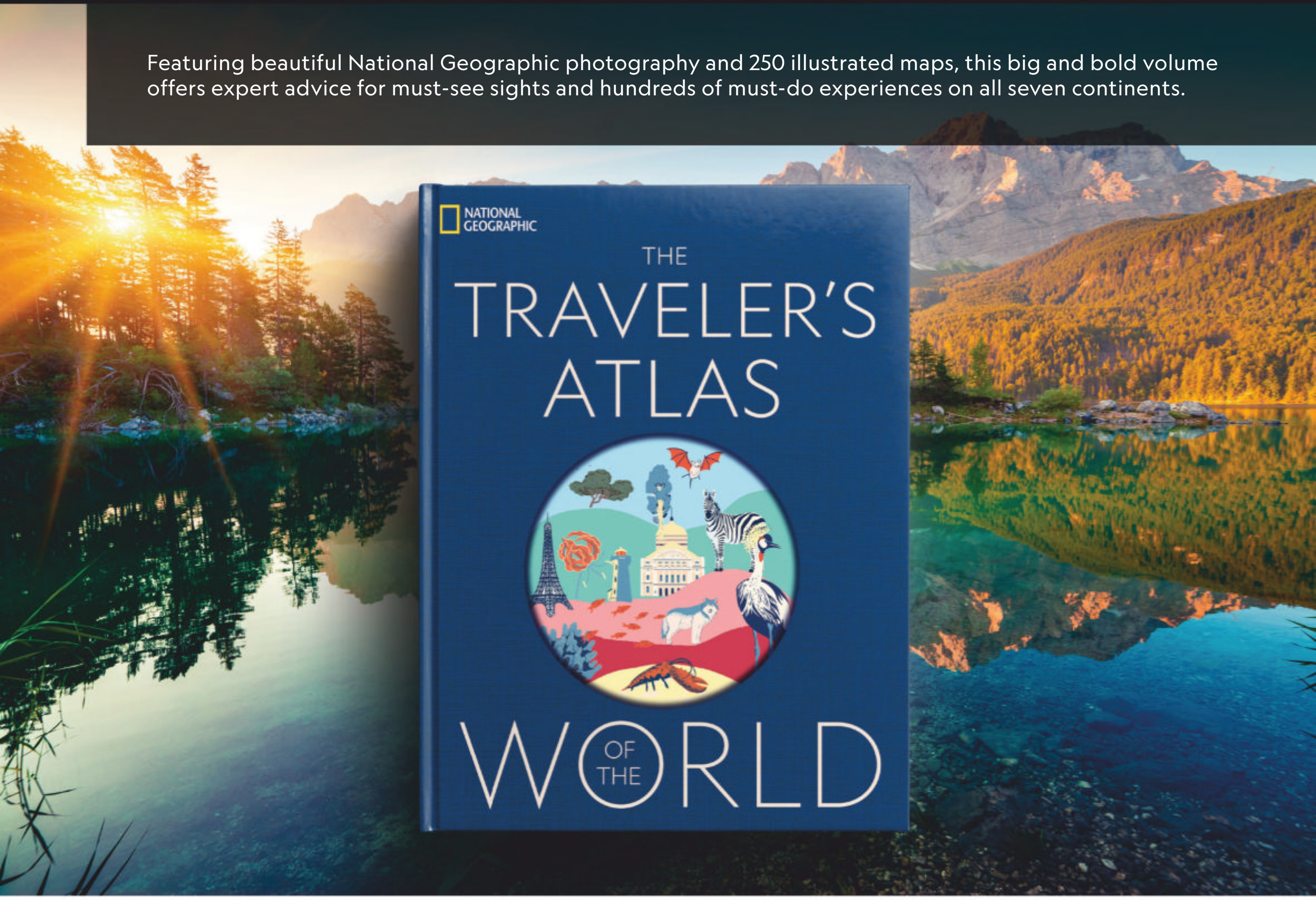
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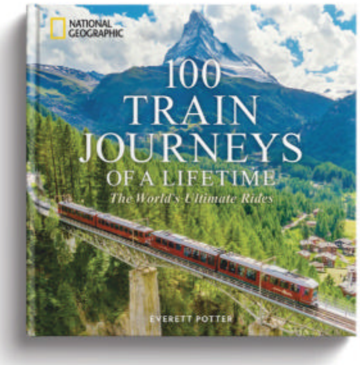
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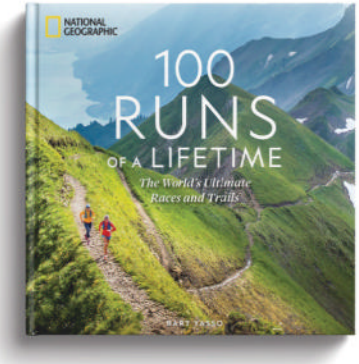
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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Continued from p.15

The Man of Many Fathers: Life Lessons Disguised as a Memoir.

By Roy Wood Jr..

Oct. 2025. 288p. Crown, $32 (9780593800072); e-book (9780593800089). 818.

A cocaine-fueled dishwasher, a racist U.S. marshal, a New Jersey pimp, and a day laborer far from home: for comedian Roy Wood Jr., this motley cast represents not just memorable acquaintances, but men who showed him something vital about life that he, as a father, has held especially close, whether they were in his life for only a day or for much longer. Throughout the book are glimpses of Wood's own father, a complicated man whose presence was often emotionally fraught. From being arrested for stealing credit cards to starting his stand-up career on Greyhound buses throughout the southeast, the chapters of Wood's life make for an expansive read that will surprise fans who may only be familiar with his stint on *The Daily Show*. It is written in a semi-epistolary style where Wood is communicating life lessons to his son while also reaching out to the men who shaped him, both positively and negatively. While Wood focuses on his "many fathers," his memoir shows plenty of reverence toward his mother, Joyce, whose eminent presence shines throughout. Wood's humor gives this memoir vitality, but his ability to distill his varied experiences into a bracing narrative will make this a read that will linger with readers long after finishing. *—Jeff Connelly*

My Year of Really Bad Dates.

By Rachel J. Lithgow.

Nov. 2025. 224p. She Writes, paper, $17.99 (9798896360100); e-book (9798896360117). 810.

Lithgow is separated (not divorced) from her husband of 20 years, and her first post-marriage relationship has (sort of) ended and left her heartbroken. Since then, she has been going on some really, really bad dates. Like the man who is only dating because his ex-wife is (he wasn't ready), or the guy who told her he wanted to immediately jump into extreme bondage (she snuck out the back of the restaurant). Over the course of a year she disastrously dates a roster of men found on various apps, all while raising teenagers, changing careers, and being strung along by the one who broke her heart. But over the course of that year, she grows, becomes braver, and comes to terms with the changes with humor, compelling prose, and, most importantly, therapy. Lithgow has an eye for description, painting vivid portraits of each date that will keep readers engrossed as they eagerly read on for what the next date has in store. Give this to your friend who loved HBO's *And Just Like That.* *—Diana Platt*

Paper Girl: A Memoir of Home and Family in a Fractured America.

By Beth Macy.

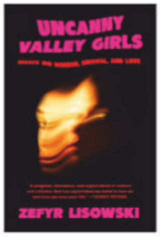
Oct. 2025. 368p. illus. Penguin, $32 (9780593656730); e-book (9780593656747). 810.

Award-winning author Macy (*Dopesick*, 2018; *Raising Lazarus*, 2022), now based in Virginia, returned to her small hometown of Urbana, Ohio, for this memoir. She focuses on how the town has changed since her childhood in the seventies into a "poorer, sicker, angrier, and less educated place" and on her struggles to get along with siblings and old friends who've remained in the area and moved decidedly to the political right, while Macy has moved to the left. Covering 2023 and 2024, the author shares her memories of growing up poor with a hard-working mother and an alcoholic father while zooming in on several people in the present, including a trans student trying to make a go of it in college, a truant officer attempting to cover a county where students increasingly don't show up for school, and Macy's ex, a former journalist transformed from "the most liberal person I knew" to a "right-wing racist and antisemite." With compassion and energy, Macy mourns the decline of mainstream journalism and makes a plea for more funding for public education, particularly college education. *—Margaret Quamme*

Uncanny Valley Girls: Essays on Horror, Survival, and Love.

By Zefyr Lisowski.

Oct. 2025. 240p. HarperPerennial, paper, $17.99 (9780063413993). 814.



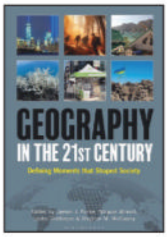
The subtitle of poet and artist Lisowki's (*Girl Work*, 2024) first book of prose nonfiction signals the braided themes that run through each chapter. Lisowski grounds her critical analysis of works of horror, like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Scream,* in who she was as a subjective viewer at the time; she's interested in the relationship between art and those perceiving it. For example, Lisowski's analysis of *The Ring,* in which the protagonist was drowned, considers the author's family's time in Jamaica, her own swim in a lake above a cemetery, a girl who drowned in Lisowski's town, the racial and class dynamics in all these scenarios, and the love relationship the author was in when she saw the film. For Lisowski, horror becomes a way to find the self, including admissions of when horror is problematic, misogynistic, and transphobic. Episodes of self-harm, mental illness, and sexuality are all explicit in the book, as they often are in horror films. Still, in the end, this is a generative book that bends toward hope. Lisowski writes, "I'm not interested in being healed or having my wounds reopened. What I want now is to love the scars that make us." *—Emily Dziuban*

Geography & Travel

Geography in the 21st Century: Defining Moments That Shaped Society.

Ed. by Jayson J. Funke and others.

2v. 2025. 800p. illus. Bloomsbury Academic, $340 (9781440873249); e-book (9798765118122). 909.83.



Geography is the study of how humans transform the natural environment—and how that environment, in turn, shapes human society. This relationship is explored here through 40 events spanning the first two decades of the twenty-first century. About a quarter of the events are natural (such as hurricanes or floods), with the remainder being political or economic in origin. The chapters are roughly chronological, beginning with the Palestinian Second Intifada (2000) and ending with the floods in Pakistan (2022). A one-page world map listing all events by chapter number is particularly helpful for navigating the volume. Each chapter opens with an overview that links the event to human–environment interaction, followed by historical and environmental context. The central section outlines the event's social, political, and ecological consequences, and the final section sharpens the human–environment dynamic while offering insight into possible future developments. A sidebar and bibliography accompany each entry. What distinguishes this work is its consistent emphasis on the mutual relationship between humans and the natural world. While a few entries verge on economic determinism—framing the environment primarily as a resource to regulate—the volume as a whole maintains its fidelity to geography as an integrative, humanistic discipline. Recommended for readers interested in global environmental and political interdependence. *—Muhammed Hassanali*

My Little Donkey: And Other Essays.

By Martha Cooley.

Nov. 2025. 256p. Catapult, $27 (9781646223022); e-book (9781646223039). 910.

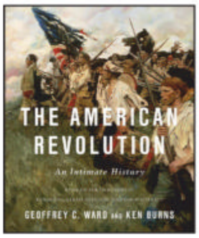
Cooley (*Guesswork*, 2017) weaves this collection of 13 essays around her retirement in Castiglione del Terziene (in northernmost Tuscany) and the U.S. with notes of family, friends, literary memories, and everyday events—don't expect a Frances Mayes-esque Italian home-alogue. Cooley's elegantly written essays deserve to be read in a relaxing lounge chair with a glass of wine. The title will prepare readers for a discussion of donkey behavior (they're not stubborn naturally; they simply freeze when they're scared). Cooley, whose grandfather was a violist for the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, also considers musicians, like John Cage and Franz Schubert, Ponzi schemes initiated by a relative, and other animals, domestic and wild, like Zora the cat and a raccoon who camps out on the fire escape. Snapshots of life in older age are interwoven into all essays: age spots, tinnitus, black ice, balancing (or not). Itinerant musings worth reading for all ages. —*Barbara Jacobs*

History

The American Revolution: An Intimate History.

By Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns.

Nov. 2025. 608p. illus. Knopf, $80 (9780525658672); e-book (9780525658689). 973.3.



With the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on the horizon, Ward and Burns bring their uniquely erudite and dynamic expertise to the story of the American Revolution. As with previous illuminating companion books for their revelatory documentaries about other wars, they chronicle political and military history in startling detail through eye-witness accounts, here sharing remarkably preserved letters, journals, maps, and sketches recording the experiences and thoughts of soldiers, women, Native Americans, and African Americans on both sides of the "bloody struggle." There's 14-year-old white fifer John Greenwood, Virginia colonist Betsy Ambler, and James Forten, who was Black and born free, served at sea, was captured, and later made a fortune as a sailmaker. As a smallpox epidemic raged, brilliant and courageous officers rallied determined, ill-equipped, and hungry soldiers as they valiantly battled in "hundreds of places" far into Canada and the South. The complete account of "the first war ever fought proclaiming the inalienable rights of all people" is as complex as it is dramatic, given that some of the leaders calling for liberty were slaveholders, the continent was already home to a long-standing democratic confederacy of Native American nations, and one of the freedoms the rebels fought for was license to seize land beyond England's colonial border. This gripping, in-the-moment, thought-provoking, visually exciting history profoundly deepens our understanding of our nation's origins and how the past is shaping our volatile present.—*Donna Seaman*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: With the documentary airing on PBS in November, requests for this munificent volume will pour in.

A Biography of a Mountain: The Making and Meaning of Mount Rushmore.

By Matthew Davis.

Nov. 2025. 336p. illus. St. Martin's, $30 (9781250285102); e-book (9781250285119). 978.3.

In March 1925, South Dakota passed legislation permitting the use of federal land—specifically, Mount Rushmore—for the site of a massive sculpture celebrating four American presidents: Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, and Roosevelt. Construction ended due to a lack of funding in 1941. The story of Mount Rushmore isn't a simple one: taken illegally from the Sioux Nation in the 1870s, it was originally proposed as the site of a sculpture honoring heroes of the American West (although the sculptor, Gutzon Borglum, went in another direction); the sculpture was initially intended to depict the presidents from the waist up; and the conception and construction of this sculpture was not merely an artistic undertaking, but also a political and historical one. It was a statement, not housed in a museum but carved into a mountain. Davis not only tells this complex story in a way that readers can follow, but also delves deeply into the motives of Borglum, the son of Danish immigrants whose vision for Mount Rushmore shaped not just the mountain, but American history itself. Absolutely fascinating. —*David Pitt*

Brothers of the Gun: Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and a Reckoning in Tombstone.

By Mark Lee Gardner.

Nov. 2025. 336p. illus. Dutton, $35 (9780593471890); e-book (9780593471913). 978.

The famous October 1881 gunfight at the O.K. Corral lasted for about thirty seconds. It was over almost before it had even started, and yet it, the town in which it took place (Tombstone), and some of its participants (marshal Wyatt Earp and his close friend Doc Holliday) have become legendary. In his new book, Gardner (*Shot All to Hell*, 2013) separates fact from historical fiction and presents the reader with these two men as they actually were. Based on seemingly exhaustive research into the historical record, the book shows us an Earp and Holliday we haven't seen before: not bigger-than-life legends, but real men who lived in a real, vividly-realized time period. They became friends when Doc saved Wyatt's life in Dodge City, and they traveled together, fought together, and gambled together. Their story in the years leading up to the brief shoot-out that catapulted them into legend is a Wild West saga as exciting as anything you'll read in the pages of a novel or see on-screen. A must-read for fans of the history of the American West. —*David Pitt*

Chain of Fire: The Siege of Khartoum and the Campaign of Egypt and the Sudan.

By Peter Hart.

Oct. 2025. 464p. illus. Pegasus, $35 (9781639369775); e-book (9781639369782). 962.4.

Construction of the Suez Canal provoked Britain's interest in Egypt and Sudan. Gaining control of Egypt in 1875 through financial legerdemain, Britain resorted to military force in 1882 to maintain it. Battle after battle raged for the next 16 years, culminating in Britain's comprehensive 1898 triumph at Omdurman in Sudan. Well-regarded historian Hart draws on eyewitness accounts by British officers and war correspondents (including Winston Churchill) to forge a tactile narrative of desert warfare along the Nile River. A key to Britain's success was creation of a British-run local army, a technique replicated throughout the British Empire. The new Egyptian army, in combination with all-British units, deployed against the dervishes led by Mohammed Ahmed, whose religiously inspired warriors eventually annihilated the British garrison at Khartoum. A general fated to WWI fame, Herbert Kitchener oversaw a methodical advance up the Nile River in revenge, via railroads and gunboats, as forces armed with machine guns and artillery overcame the largely spear-wielding dervishes. Hart depicts swirling firefights, artillery barrages, and cavalry charges with blood-and-guts verve in this vivid chronicle of the military aspects of imperialism. —*Gilbert Taylor*

The Dark Side of the Earth: Russia's Short-lived Victory over Totalitarianism.

By Mikhail Zygar.

Nov. 2025. 544p. illus. Scribner, $31 (9781668013908); e-book (9781668013922). 947.08.

Examining Russian history is disheartening. Is it an eternally dark place of cynicism with no hope for the future? Or has the opportunity for democracy fallen just short each time? Seasoned journalist Zygar draws from a decade of interviews with a wide array of Soviet leaders, including Mikhail Gorbachev, writers, musicians, poets, and academics, to reveal a lively underground of Russian hopes and yearning for freedom. He sets those conversations within an in-depth survey of Russian and Soviet history, humanizing those in the communist government and society in contrast to the West's view of a faceless mass. He makes it clear that there has always been a great variety of Russians across ethnic and regional lines with many points of view that were often only barely overpowered by totalitarian ideology. Zygar does an excellent job of tracking the changes and forces at work during the 30-year span between Yuri Gagarin becoming the first human in space in 1961 to Gorbachev's resignation and the end of the USSR. Zygar's richly specific and dynamic history sets the stage for today's Russian fascism. —*James Pekoll*

Family of Spies: A World War II Story of Nazi Espionage, Betrayal, and the Secret History behind Pearl Harbor.

By Christine Kuehn.

Dec. 2025. 272p. Macmillan/Celadon, $29.99 (9781250344465); e-book (9781250344472). 940.534.

In 1994, journalist Kuehn was living in suburban Maryland, raising a family, and working for a local radio station when she learned that her father's long-dead German parents and his sister had been spies for the Japanese in Hawaii in the years leading up to Pearl Harbor. Through research, including extensive FBI files tracking the family's life in Hawaii, she was able to flesh out the family secret. Not only were they spies, but Kuehn's grandparents and aunt, as well as an uncle who remained in Germany, were ardent Nazis. Kuehn's father, who was nine when the family came to Hawaii, was neither a Nazi nor a spy but a patriotic young man who enlisted in the U.S. Army and earned a Bronze Star fighting on Okinawa. Kuehn writes with empathy about her father's life. While she works to uncover the past, he receives a dementia diagnosis, losing what memories he might have shared. The FBI files, Kuehn shows, also provide insight into the intelligence mistakes that led to the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor. A fascinating addition to WWII literature. —*Laurie Unger Skinner*

Fateful Hours: The Collapse of the Weimar Republic.

By Volker Ullrich and Jefferson Chase.

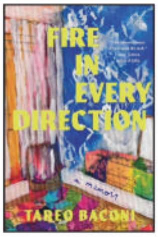
Nov. 2025. 400p. illus. Norton, $35 (9781324110545); e-book (9781324110552). 943.086.

Ullrich (*Germany 1923*, 2023) argues that the fall of the Weimar Republic, which ushered in the Third Reich, was not inevitable. At several points during the Republic's existence, Ullrich asserts, the country's leadership could have made certain choices that may have halted Hitler's rise to power. Ullrich spotlights the main political and economic events that took place during the Republic era, including uprisings, right-wing terror, effects of inflation, high unemployment, labor disputes, and effects of reparations. He includes clear explanations of these events, analyzes missteps taken by the government during these times, and assesses how the legitimacy and credibility of the Republic was impacted as a result. Additionally, Ullrich explains potential alternative paths that may have preserved the Republic and stopped the Nazis. However, in eerie parallels to the present day, elites favored authoritarian rule and centrist political parties moved rightward to address public discontent, as political leadership wrongly felt that Hitler would moderate his views or become controllable. A prescient reminder of the fragility of democracy. —*Rebekah Kati*

Fire in Every Direction.

By Tareq Baconi.

Nov. 2025. 256p. Washington Square, $29 (9781668068564); e-book (9781668068588). 956.94.



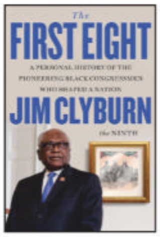
Acclaimed scholar and analyst Baconi chronicles his coming-of-age as a young gay man and defiant Palestinian. Raised largely in Amman, Jordan, by parents with vivid memories of escapes from Palestine and the Lebanese civil war, young Baconi is shy and uncertain of his place in the world. Bullied at school as a "little girl" and keenly aware that he is a disappointment to his father, Baconi desperately tries to tamp down his growing attraction to men, especially his best friend, Ramzi. When their increasingly close friendship and provocative correspondence is discovered, Baconi attempts to flee his demons by studying in London. There, surrounded by "Arab men who despise their queerness and queer men who despise their Arabness," Tareq accepts his sexuality and his Palestinian rage. As he learns more of his family's complex history ("A timeline etched in massacres"), shame turns to pride, and he becomes closer to his mother, understanding for the first time her revolutionary past as a student leader. Yet this same acceptance and pride in his queerness will instead distance him further from his father, who decrees that Baconi must never come out to his family and never return to the family home. A brilliant and wrenching tale of personal and political awakening. —*Lesley Williams*

YA: *Teens questioning their sexuality and their place in the world will identify with young Baconi's struggles to integrate his queerness and his Palestinian identity. LW.*

The First Eight: A Personal History of the Pioneering Black Congressmen Who Shaped a Nation.

By Jim Clyburn.

Nov. 2025. 304p. illus. Little, Brown, $30 (9780316572743); e-book (9780316572767). 973.8.


The FIRST EIGHT
A PERSONAL HISTORY OF THE PIONEERING BLACK CONGRESSMEN WHO SHAPED A NATION
JIM CLYBURN

South Carolina Congressman Clyburn presents a vividly written account of the life and times of the first eight African Americans who represented South Carolina in the U.S. House of Representatives. The first eight were Robert Smalls, Joseph Rainey, George Washington Murray, Robert DeLarge, Alonzo Ransier, Thomas Miller, Richard Harry Cain, and Robert Brown Elliott. They represented the state after the Civil War and served prominently in the state's government and Republican Party. Whites opposing African American civil rights used legal chicanery, fraud, and violence to challenge the re-election of these eight men, but Smalls and Murray served several terms in Congress even after whites gutted Reconstruction. Clyburn expertly and concisely blends the history of Reconstruction and accounts of the differing backgrounds and lives of each of the first eight. Images of the time, including Thomas Nast cartoons, enrich the narrative. Clyburn acknowledges that these men sometimes undercut their efforts with needless disagreements, examines allegations of corruption against them, and details their efforts to battle corruption. Whether they advocated for civil rights or hurricane aid, the first eight served all South Carolinians with distinction. Clyburn, who learned he has many connections to Smalls' descendants and may be related to Murray, compares the lives of the first eight to his personal and public experiences. —*John Rowen*

YA/C: *YAs interested in or researching history and politics will appreciate Clyburn's vibrant and accessible account of the first eight's political coming-of-age and their careers. JR.*

Gaza: The Story of a Genocide.

Ed. by Fatima Bhutto and Sonia Faleiro.

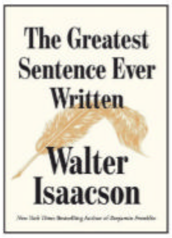
Oct. 2025. 304p. illus. Verso, paper, $19.95 (9781836742241); e-book (9781836742265). 956.943.

This haunting and informative collection of personal accounts, reporting, poetry, art, and photographs by prominent Palestinian writers and artists fills in the backstory of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza and provides some unexpected perspectives. Beginning with Israel's callously racist descriptions of Palestinians as living by the "law of the jungle" and their 1948 expulsion as a "moral necessity," editors Bhutto (*The Runaways*, 2020) and Faleiro (*The Good Girls*, 2020) move on to shocking examples of Western duplicity and denial. Other pieces address the climate devastation of nearly two years of bombing, the anguish of families ripped to pieces in front of each other, the terrifying humiliation of random imprisonment, and a teacher's grief at losing a half-dozen of her middle-school students. Perhaps most poignant is a reflection from 28-year-old Palestinian journalist Anas al-Sharif, stoically reporting on the bombing of his family home. "By God," he says, "the bitterness of betrayal is a thousand times more severe and harsher than the pain of aggression, war, massacres, displacement, and starvation." Months later he was targeted and killed in an air strike. In all, a harrowing indictment. —*Lesley Williams*

The Greatest Sentence Ever Written.

By Walter Isaacson.

Nov. 2025. 80p. Simon & Schuster, $20 (9781982181314); e-book (9781982181338). 973.313.



Thirty-five words. That's the length of the second sentence of the Declaration of Independence, the one that begins with "We hold these truths to be self-evident" and ends with "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." In between, there is talk of equality and sacrosanct rights. It's a lot to pack into a single sentence, but award-winning biographer Isaacson cogently honors the wisdom it took to create it. Its authors—Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams—struggled over concerns such as, who, precisely, should be included in "We" and whether "inalienable" would be a better choice than "unalienable." Glimpses into such behind-the-scenes polishing of the most important of our country's foundational documents would be fascinating in and of itself, but as the Declaration's 250th anniversary draws near, Isaacson's granular analysis serves as a more potent lesson. Our nascent nation was freeing itself from Britain's tyrannical rule, the facts of which are specifically enumerated in the body of the Declaration. Re-reading these grievances through the lens of today's politically fraught atmosphere is a chilling but necessary exercise. In Isaacson's expert hands, those 35 words, and the ones that come after them, gain a new level of clarity and relevance, and inspire deepened appreciation. —*Carol Haggas*

Hitler and My Mother-in-Law.

By Terese Svoboda.

Oct. 2025. 280p. Counterpoint/OR , paper, $24.95 (9781682196519); e-book (9781682196526). 943.086.

"The impetus behind all memoir is about

getting to the truth," says Svoboda (*Dog on Fire*, 2023) at the outset of her chronicle of the life of her late mother-in-law, Patricia Lochridge Hartwell. Pat's life was rich enough to warrant a full-fledged biography—she was a WWII correspondent for CBS radio and national publications, the only female journalist to cover both Pacific and European theaters of operation, a postwar UNICEF administrator, a professor, a newspaper publisher, and a director of municipal fine arts commissions in both Arizona and Hawaii. But getting to Pat's truth proves to be a slippery endeavor: anecdotes are offered with scant evidence; photographs of war correspondent Pat standing over a pile of ashes purported to be Hitler's may merely be "distinct possibilities," inferring that while there may be a grain of truth in the lore her mother-in-law has handed down, there's probably not enough to make an entire meal from. In what proves to be an absorbing, reverberating portrait, Svoboda intersperses episodes of her own varied experiences with those of her mother-in-law to chilling and unsettling effect. —*Carol Haggas*

Indignity: A Life Reimagined.

By Lea Ypi.

Nov. 2025. 368p. Farrar, $28 (9780374614096). 949.6.

Ypi's first book, *Free* (2022), told of her adolescence during the turbulent 1980s and 1990s in Albania. Now she tells the story of her grandparents, Leman and Asllan, who were young newlyweds at the height of WWII, navigating the complicated politics of the Balkans. Ypi's family was at the center of the communist/capitalist tangle as the region was destabilized and reorganized, particularly in Albania and Greece; Asllan's father was the prime minister of Albania, and his friends were deeply involved in the Communist Party. Ypi investigates the paper trail of her grandparents' mysterious journeys, which gives the book a thrilling pace. She sees a picture of her beaming grandparents in 1941 and asks how they could look so fabulous and happy during one of the heaviest times in their region's history. Their world comes to life in vivid detail through Ypi's imagined flashbacks of what Leman, Asllan, and their families faced. Guiding readers to be curious about their own roots, Ypi's exquisite research and compassionate curiosity for the past make for another great read. —*Courtney Eathorne*

Milestone Documents of American Presidents: Exploring the Essential Primary Sources.

Ed. by Chester Pach.

2025. 1,164p. illus. Schlager, $395 (9781961844292); e-book (9781961844377). 973.

This well-designed primary-source compilation offers over 100 speeches, letters, manifestos, legislation, correspondence, executive orders, and more, presented unabridged and in chronological order. Coverage begins with Washington's 1789 inaugural address and concludes with Trump's April 2, 2025 Executive Order 14257 on tariffs. Although not all presidents are represented, there is evenhanded representation of America's political landscape. Documents are accompanied by notes on historical context, extended explanation and analysis, editorial commentary, and study questions. Andrew Jackson's 1830 Indian Removal address, for example, is contextualized in light of his support for speculators trying to exploit the land long "inhabited and claimed as national territory by the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw nations." Similarly, Theodore Roosevelt's 1908 Special Message to Congress on Worker's Compensation aided progressive reforms such as worker's compensation and child-labor laws. This compilation is unequivocally recommended for secondary-school students learning American history through primary-source material. Furthermore, anyone motivated to develop a genuine understanding of American history will benefit from the unfiltered, unaltered quality of these documents. —*Art Lichtenstein*

YA/C: *Secondary-school researchers will benefit from this compilation of American primary-source documents. AL.*

Queer Enlightenments: A Hidden History of Lovers, Lawbreakers, and Homemakers.

By Anthony Delaney.

Oct. 2025. 352p. illus. Atlantic Monthly, $30 (9780802165961); e-book (9780802165978). 908.

To counter the idea that queer history starts with the twentieth-century gay rights movement, historian Delaney explores the stories of queer people from the eighteenth century. His goal is to move beyond the initial stage of "finding the gays in the past" and to add nuance to the complex lives of queer historical figures. In his thoroughly researched debut, Delaney adds new details to the stories of famous queer people, like the Ladies of Llangollen, Anne Lister, Mary Jones, and the Chevalière d'Éon. He notes that some queer individuals, like Lister, John Hervey, and Ste Fox, were able to work within a patriarchal system and leverage their privilege as white aristocrats and landowners, while those less fortunate, including George Wilson and Gabriel Lawrence, paid steeper costs for the ways they expressed their gender and sexuality. Delaney writes for both an academic and a popular audience, sometimes struggling to strike a balance that works. Despite that, his book is a welcome addition to the growing body of queer histories. —*Rebecca Hopman*

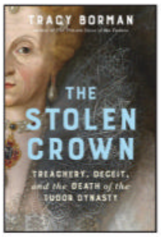
YA/S: *Teens interested in LGBTQ history will appreciate learning about eighteenth-century queer historical figures. RH.*

★ The Stolen Crown: Treachery, Deceit, and the Death of the Tudor Dynasty.

By Tracy Borman.

Nov. 2025. 448p. Atlantic Monthly, $30 (9780802165909); e-book (9780802165916). 941.

Just when readers think they know everything about their favorite historical figure, along comes modern research to shake things up. Continuing her excellent analysis of the life of Queen Elizabeth I (*Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth I*, 2023), eminent historian Borman turns her attention to the question that plagued the last Tudor monarch almost from the moment she became queen: Who would succeed her? Elizabeth's unconventional choice to remain unmarried (thus always available to prospective suitors) meant that she would have no natural heirs, giving rise to a panoply of potential claimants posturing and scheming for first place in her affections. Borman delves into the uncertainty created by Elizabeth's decisions, particularly affecting her Scottish cousins, Mary, Queen of Scots, and her son, James VI. The account of William Camden, whose writings form the basis of knowledge of Elizabeth's final days, has recently been determined to have been heavily amended, raising concerns about its validity. Borman details how those revisions may hold the key to understanding how precarious the transition from Tudor to Stuart actually was, with tantalizing implications. Highly recommended, Borman's fascinating report illustrates yet again the veracity of the adage that history is merely a fable agreed upon. —*Karen Clements*



The Wounded Generation: Coming Home after World War II.

By David Nasaw.

Oct. 2025. 496p. illus. Penguin, $35 (9780593298695); e-book (9780593298701). 940.53.

Best-selling historian Nasaw (*The Last Million*, 2020) deepens the usual approach to WWII's Greatest Generation by examining the real-world costs and sacrifices made by veterans, their families, and society at large. He focuses on the unseen wounds—neuropsychiatric symptoms previously understood as shell shock or battle fatigue and that are now known as post-traumatic stress disorder—and how their symptoms, including nightmares, headaches, irritability, and alcoholism, affected veterans and their loved ones. In parallel, Nasaw tracks the complicated processes of demobilization and reintegration of veterans through the many provisions and programs of the GI Bill of Rights of 1944, which, however imperfectly executed, was light-years ahead of the chaos surrounding the endings of previous wars. Nasaw covers the inequities of the transition from military to civilian life, the uneven distribution of benefits, and, despite myriad sham schools taking advantage of veterans' educational programs, how the GI Bill produced a large middle class of educated and professional homeowners. Richly informative and compelling, *The Wounded Generation* is an important history of the tragedies of war and the triumphs of a democratic society that fully supports veterans' well-being. —*James Pekoll*

Spotlight on **the Arts**

Art from *History Hiding around Broadway*.

The Accidental Picasso Thief: The True Story of a Reverse Heist, Outrunning the FBI, and Fleeing the Boston Mob.

By Whit Rummel and Noah Charney.

Nov. 2025. 160p. illus. Bloomsbury Academic, $35 (9798765188262); e-book (9798765188279). 364.16.

Growing up as the sons of Whitcomb Rummel, the "ice cream king" of Waterville, Maine, Bill and Whit Jr. got into their share of beer-fueled small-town hijinks. But the stakes went up when Bill, fresh from the Coast Guard and working as a forklift operator at Boston's Logan Airport, somehow ended up with Picasso's late-period *Portrait of a Woman and a Musketeer* in the trunk of his Chevy Impala. Terrified to learn that both the FBI and the Boston mob were looking for the painting, the Rummel boys and their larger-than-life businessman father executed a daring "reverse heist" to anonymously return the artwork. Years later, the story would be covered on NPR's *This American Life* and elsewhere, but ambiguities remain. Did Bill know what was in the crate when he took it home? Had his supervisor given him permission? Was the caper inspired by the 1968 film *The Thomas Crown Affair*? Narrated in rollicking fashion by Whit Jr., this book considers these questions and more. But the real mystery may be the narrator's father, whose secrets textured a "life dynamically, adventurously lived." —*Brendan Driscoll*

The Art of Fatherhood: What Art, Film, Television, and Literature Tell Us About Being a Good Father.

By Noah Charney and Miha Mazzini.

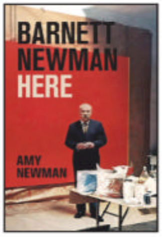
Oct. 2025. 192p. illus. Bloomsbury Academic, $32 (9781538193822); e-book (9781538193839). 791.45.

The new book by art historian Charney and novelist and screenwriter Mazzini is a splendid counterpoint to the myriad humor books about parenting and being a dad. This one doesn't purport to tell the reader how to be a father. Instead, it takes a sociological approach, looking at works of art, cinema, and literature throughout history to show us how the very idea of fatherhood has evolved over time. From ancient hunter-gatherer cultures to the Old Testament to the rise of the bourgeoisie class, right up to the modern day, the authors chart the ever-shifting role of the father, both as it was set down in the historical record and as it was interpreted by artists, writers, and filmmakers. It's a fascinating approach to the subject, and the authors do a remarkable job of keeping the tone light and entertaining, even when they're diving into some pretty serious material. Readers will come away with a deeper understanding not just of the concept of fatherhood but of the way fathers have been perceived since the dawn of human history. —*David Pitt*

Barnett Newman: Here.

By Amy Newman.

Oct. 2025. 672p. illus. Princeton, $39.95 (9780691249186); e-book (9780691274706). 759.13.



Barnett Newman, known as Barney, is one of the most renowned of the original New York abstract expressionists, creating audaciously large, minimalist paintings of mysterious powers and arresting impact. But he didn't start painting until he was in his early forties, then died at the peak of his fame at age 65 in 1970. What was he up to before he finally put brush to canvas? Art historian Newman (no relation) had unique access to the artist's extensive archive and devoted more than 15 years to creating the first comprehensive biography of this intriguingly volatile and charismatic artist. With perpetual detail and intricate insights, she deftly covers Barney's family history, deep feelings about being Jewish, voracious reading, arts education, and reliance for many years on his smart and heroically hard-working wife, Annalee, to support them. Charming, loquacious, disputatious, inquisitive, and dapper, Barney loved New York and was always out and about. Keenly attuned to the zeitgeist and the news, often in competition and conflict with his peers, and zealous in his righteous crusades against injustices personal and social, he wrote more than he painted, generating a treasury of letters, articles, and diatribes. Yet in the studio, he channeled his turmoil into a concentrated pursuit of the sublime. Amy Newman's vibrant magnum opus gloriously reveals Barnett Newman in full. —*Donna Seaman*

Bob Dylan: Things Have Changed; A Kind-of Biography.

By Ron Rosenbaum.

Oct. 2025. 304p. Melville, $32 (9781685892258); e-book (9781685892265). 782.42.

In 1977, journalist Rosenbaum interviewed Bob Dylan over a 10-day stretch—reportedly the longest interview the singer ever gave—in a Warner Bros. back lot as Dylan was going over the footage of his widely panned film, *Renaldo and Clara* (Rosenbaum makes a case for its rerelease). Rosenbaum's intention, he says, is to write a book not only for Dylanologists but also for those "who wonder what the fuss is about." In this "kind of biography," Rosenbaum focuses on particular aspects of Dylan's songwriting and asks, What makes Dylan Dylan? Rosenbaum discusses Dylan and the Holocaust, his northern Midwest sensibility, his Jesus period, his prophetic vision and poetic genius, and his ability to create Jewish art "with a wide multicultural reach." Influences also play a key role. Rosenbaum has a subtle and sly sense of humor, as when he notes that Dylan has a "rusty ore-cart voice that still drives some people mad" and the time he "caused a tempest in a cappuccino cup" when he left the folk scene. An idiosyncratic discussion of Dylan's artistry and impact on mainstream culture. —*June Sawyers*

Bringing Song and Dance to the Screen: Directors of Golden Age Hollywood Musicals.

By Thomas S. Hischak.

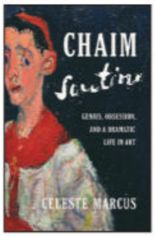
Oct. 2025. 208p. illus. Bloomsbury Academic, $45 (9781538195826); e-book (9781538195833). 791.43.

The three decades between 1927's *The Jazz Singer* and 1958's *Gigi* saw the production of some of the most beloved musical films of all time. Prolific performing-arts writer Hischak profiles 27 of their directors. Some specialized in musical films; others found themselves recruited to direct a musical because they were under contract to a particular studio. Some will be familiar to movie musical fans, such as Vincente Minnelli, Busby Berkeley, and Gene Kelly, while many are not as well known. After providing biographical information for each director, Hischak looks at several of their musicals, their nonmusical works, and the Hollywood movie scene of the time. He also digs deeper to uncover each director's contribution to the Hollywood musical in terms of innovations, sense of style, and distinct approaches to working with singers, dancers, and actors. All these discussions are set against a background of Hollywood history. This exhaustive study is supplemented by a list of directors and their film musical credits and awards. A great resource for film students and serious fans of film musicals. —*Carolyn Mulac*

Chaim Soutine: Genius, Obsession, and a Dramatic Life in Art.

By Celeste Marcus.

Nov. 2025. 304p. illus. Basic, $34 (9781541703223); e-book (9781541703247). 759.4.



Marcus slashes through the fog of assumptions surrounding the painter Chaim Soutine. Born in 1893 as the tenth child in a poor Jewish family in a village near Minsk, he soon displayed the preternatural artistic talent and commitment that propelled him to Paris. Marcus recounts the extreme poverty and squalor of his first years there with arresting details as she places this "misanthropic, awkward, semisocialized genius" within the city's burgeoning immigrant-artist enclave. Modigliani, his temperamental opposite, befriended Soutine and steered him to art dealers and collectors in-between epic bouts of drinking and drama. Inspired by Rembrandt, Soutine painted in a frenzy from life: flowers, animal carcasses, people, and landscapes. A painter herself, Marcus describes Soutine's kinetic approach with tactile exactitude and fresh insight, elucidating the urgency of his work as he sought "to convey through paint the vitality of the world." Paralleling the churning of Soutine's canvases is his rise from filth and hunger, a suspenseful story punctuated by vivid profiles of his supporters, including collector Albert Barnes, a remarkably "poetic" police commissioner, and two women who loved him. In great peril as a Jew in occupied France, Soutine died at age 50. Marcus' electrifying and zealously corrective biography embodies the energy and boldness of Soutine's paintings and extends our appreciation for the painter and his radical creations. —*Donna Seaman*

The Complete Johnny Cash: Lyrics from a Lifetime of Songwriting.

By Johnny Cash and Mark Stielper.

Oct. 2025. 720p. Little, Brown/Voracious, $60 (9780316503549); e-book (9780316504058). 782.421.

According to John Carter Cash, what made his father stand out was not only his voice but his words. He was a writer. "His words put him on the path to Forever." Cash began writing as young as 12. The core themes of his lyrics were love and hope accompanied by a dash of humor. He worked his entire life; his last recording session occurred 10 days before his death. This tome collects nearly 600 compositions that Cash wrote or co-wrote, from the 1940s to 2003, including "Folsom Prison Blues" and "I Walk the Line." Comparing their task to an archaeological dig, Cash scholar Stielper scoured notebooks, leather-bound diaries, postcards, hotel stationary, and even scribblings on the bark of a tree trunk. Stielper's essays discuss Cash's lifelong love of gospel music (he was the grandson and great-grandson of Baptist preachers), his concept albums, outlaw songs, and topical songs as well as his late-career collaboration with producer Rick Rubin, which attracted new fans. A must for admirers of the Man in Black. —*June Sawyers*

The Dream Factory: London's First Playhouse and the Making of William Shakespeare.

By Daniel Swift.

Nov. 2025. 320p. illus. Farrar, $29 (9780374601270); e-book (9780374601287). 792.09.

When the Globe Theatre opened in 1599, Shakespeare was already well-known as a playwright and poet. How did the work of the son of a Stratford glovemaker make it to the London stage? Readers will find the answer lies in Swift's fascinating and detailed history of an earlier venue, the Theatre, open from 1576 to 1598, the first purpose-built commercial playhouse in London and site of the first performances of some of Shakespeare's most beloved plays. This is where he learned his craft, working with other writers and actors while trying to make a living as a playwright. Swift drew from a variety of archival sources, including records that detailed the working lives of the men of Shakespeare's time and accounts of the various lawsuits involving the Theatre. His purpose was to look for Shakespeare the common man and how he worked with and learned from others, observing, "He was not in those years a minor deity but a labouring writer." A worthy addition to Shakespearean studies and an engaging read for theater students, aspiring playwrights, and playgoers. —*Carolyn Mulac*

Finding Home.

By Denise Nicholas.

Nov. 2025. 328p. Agate, $30 (9781572843530); e-book (9781572849020). 791.4502.

Stunning and consummately professional, guidance counselor Liz MacIntyre won the hearts of millions on the early 1970s dramedy *Room 222*, one of the first television shows with an integrated cast. Actress Denise Nicholas faced far more struggles on the way to professional success than the character she played. Born and raised in Detroit by an emotionally absent mother and a father who realized early on that she was not his biological child, young Denise, a light-skinned Black girl, struggled with poverty, racial identity, and finding her place in an often hostile world. Determined to prove herself, Nicholas traveled to Mississippi for the Freedom Summer voter registration drive, a terrifying experience she later recounted in her novel *Freshwater Road*. There she encountered the Freedom Theatre and acting. As the self-confident Liz, Nicholas presented an image of respectable, middle-class Black success, yet studio staff were openly racist. After the show's cancellation, Nicholas struggled to find meaningful acting work, eventually turning to writing, partially to cope with a tragic family death. Now in her eighties, Nicholas continues to speak out against racism. —*Lesley Williams*

★ Googoosh: A Sinful Voice.

By Googoosh and Tara Dehlavi.

Dec. 2025. 336p. illus. Gallery, $30 (9781668067420); e-book (9781668067444). 782.42.

This thoroughly engaging memoir from Iranian pop superstar Googoosh doesn't unfold like other celebrity biographies, though some elements of her life seem heartbreakingly familiar to readers of those books. Googoosh was only a toddler when first pushed on stage, was relentlessly exploited by her hapless father and cruelly mistreated by a scheming stepmother, and escaped into an early marriage with an unfaithful husband who spent all her money. She went on to perform before royalty with stars like Tina Turner and Elton John, her every move covered by the press and her fashion choices copied by legions of avid fans—and then came the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The author's continuing life story unfolds against the horrors of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime as she relates her terrifying mistreatment by sharia morality police during her imprisonment. Googoosh recalls her fellow detainees pressing her for showbiz gossip; instead, she recreated scenes from her past, vivid images of life in Tehran. Her many fans know there's an eventual happy ending but will still be riveted by the accounts of unimaginable torture and repression that became part of her tumultuous personal saga. Googoosh's singing is revered for its storytelling aspects; this heartfelt and moving testimonial flows like an anthem. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Great Musicians.

Ed. by James Drake and Edward Smyth.

Nov. 2025. 256p. illus. Bloomsbury Continuum, $26 (9781399419468). 780.922.

The latest volume in the Letters for the Ages series offers a stunning array of musical minds, featuring correspondence from the twelfth to the twenty-first centuries. Represented are artists as diverse as Chopin, the Ramones, John Coltrane, and Clara Schumann. An 18-year-old Mozart boasts to his mother that each aria of his new opera was met with "a tremendous uproar and clapping of hands." Amy Winehouse, in an application to theater school, introduces herself by stating, "all my life I have been loud, to the point of being told to shut up." Com-

Continued on p.28

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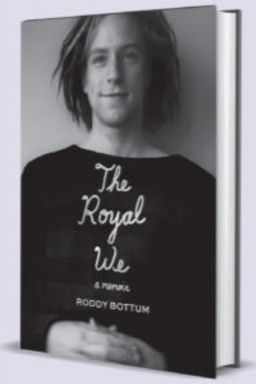
The Royal We by Roddy Bottum



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"Roddy Bottum comes into his sexuality in a homophobic music scene, creating a stunning landscape of alienation and drug use that he manages to lift himself out of. There's an exuberance to the telling of his adventure that guides the reader along through the darkest of moments."
—Kim Gordon, author of *Girl in a Band*

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Booklist Essentials

Broadway Musicals

by Donna Seaman

The Broadway musical is beloved for its dynamic mix of artistry and entertainment and of story, music, stars, visual splendor, and overall pizzazz. As we mark the tenth anniversary of the (let's just go with it) revolutionary *Hamilton*, these histories and memoirs offer social context and behind-the-scenes revelations.

Art from *Theater Kid; Something Wonderful;* and *Lin-Manuel Miranda*.

American Musicals in Context: From the American Revolution to the 21st Century. By Thomas A. Greenfield. 2021. ABC-CLIO, $97 (9781440865404).

This readable and illuminating reference features the playbooks of 20 musicals that are based on events in U.S. history and first performed between 1925 and 2016. Such hits as *Hair*, *Hamilton*, and *1776* are here, along with *I'd Rather be Right*, *Shenandoah*, and *Warpaint*. Greenfield summarizes the plot, historical source, and political viewpoint of each play; profiles playwrights, composers, performers, musicians, and producers; and chronicles each musical's critical reception.

Footnotes: The Black Artists Who Rewrote the Rules of the Great White Way. By Caseen Gaines. 2021. Sourcebooks, $26.99 (9781492688815).

The remarkable story of the 1921 trailblazing, all-Black musical, *Shuffle Along*, is explored by pop-culture historian Gaines, who introduces the innovative creators Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake, Flournoy Miller, and Aubrey Lyles and captures the historic moment and the many issues involved.

Failing Up: How to Take Risks, Aim Higher, and Never Stop Learning. By Leslie Odom, Jr. 2018. Feiwel and Friends, $19.99 (9781250139962).

Tony and Grammy Award–winning Odom, who performed in *Rent* at age 17, is best known as the original actor in the role of Aaron Burr in the hip-hop musical sensation *Hamilton*. In this memoir/self-help book, he shares his experiences and bestows sage advice for aspiring performers and anyone struggling to pursue a passion.

How Sondheim Can Change Your Life. By Richard Schoch. 2024. Atria, $28.99 (9781668030592).

Schoch pays lively and expert tribute to one of the gods of musical theater by considering 13 of Sondheim's shows, from 1959's *Gypsy* to 1979's *Sweeney Todd* to 2023's *Here We Are*, discussing the songs and characters and parsing each show's overall meaning amidst coverage of productions and performers.

In the Heights: Finding Home. By Lin-Manuel Miranda and others. 2021. Random, $40 (9780593229590).

The radical idea for a musical combining rap and salsa came to Lin-Manuel Miranda when he was a college sophomore, propelling him to work diligently for 21 years against great odds to create *In the Heights*, his paean to his beloved home, New York City's Washington Heights. Each stage of development and collaboration is candidly described and documented in this ebullient scrapbook.

The In-Between: Intimate and Candid Moments of Broadway Stars. By Jenny Anderson. 2025. Applause, $45 (9781493088119).

In the theater, the in-between moments are those in which actors warm up, don their costumes, apply makeup, and calm their nerves before hitting the stage. Jenny Anderson's stunning photographs capture these private interludes at such shows as *Hamilton*, *Wicked*, *The Lion King*, *Kinky Boots*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Waitress*, and *Hadestown*, while her subjects include Patti LuPone, Jonathan Groff, Ben Platt, Leslie Odom Jr., Kelli O'Hara, and Chita Rivera.

Lin-Manuel Miranda: The Education of an Artist. By Daniel Pollack-Pelzner. 2025. Simon & Schuster, $30 (9781668014707).

Lin-Manuel Miranda is "a cultural omnivore," observes Pollack-Pelzner in this insightful look into Miranda's complex, magpie mind, insatiable curiosity, synthesizing his Puerto Rican heritage with hip-hop and American history, artistic development, struggles, and phenomenal success.

Putting It Together: How Stephen Sondheim and I Created Sunday in the Park with George. By James Lapine. 2021. Farrar, $40 (9780374200091).

Sunday in the Park with George dramatizes the creation of painter Georges Seurat's masterpiece, *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. Lapine, whose honors include Tony, Drama Desk, Pulitzer, and Peabody awards, recounts the creation of the landmark musical with Stephen Sondheim, the start to a phenomenal collaboration.

Shy: The Alarmingly Outspoken Memoirs of Mary Rodgers. By Mary Rodgers and Jesse Green. 2022. Farrar, $35 (9780374298623).

Mary Rodgers, the daughter of Broadway composer Richard Rodgers, had only one real musical success, the 1959 show, *Once upon a Mattress*. But her best-selling children's novel, *Freaky Friday*, was spun off into movies and TV shows, and Rodgers knew everyone on Broadway and tells many remarkable tales.

Singular Sensation: The Triumph of Broadway. By Michael Riedel. 2020. Simon & Schuster/Avid Reader, $28 (9781501166631).

New York theater critic Riedel considers the 1990s "a decade of profound change on Broadway" and here pulls back the curtain on some of its most popular shows, including Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard*, the phenomenon that was *Rent,* the 1992 revival of *Guys and Dolls,* Edward Albee's comeback, the story of *Angels in America*, and much more.

Slow Train Coming: Bob Dylan's Girl from the North Country and Broadway's Rebirth. By Todd Almond. 2025. Bloomsbury Academic, $35 (9781350407381).

Slow Train Coming, named after one of Bob Dylan's "born again" albums, starts out as a memoir, but singer, composer, and actor Almond, who debuted on Broadway playing Elias in Conor McPherson's musical adaptation of Dylan's "Girl from the North Country," decided to interview everyone involved in the show to more fully understand his experience.

Something Wonderful: Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway Revolution. By Todd S. Purdum. 2018. Holt, $32 (9781627798341).

Although the biographies of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein are threaded throughout, Purdum is more focused on the music and how this most successful of writing duos crafted some of the finest musicals to grace the American stage, including *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, and *The Sound of Music*.

The Spamalot Diaries. By Eric Idle. 2024. 208p. Crown, $25 (9780593800485).

Bringing *Spamalot*, the musical based loosely on the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, to the Broadway stage was no easy feat, as Idle, who wrote the playbook, with John Du Prez composing the score and Mike Nichols directing, recorded in his diary, noting the joys, frustrations, and unexpected moments of discovery.

Theater Kid: A Broadway Memoir. By Jeffrey Seller. 2025. Simon & Schuster, $29.99 (9781668064184).

Producer Seller is the recipient of 22 Tony Awards and has the distinction of being the only producer of two Pulitzer Prize–winning musicals (*Rent* and *Hamilton*). He blends personal and professional stories in this forthright and compelling theater memoir.

Voice Lessons: A Sisters Story. By Cara Mentzel. 2017. St. Martin's, $27.99 (9781250105240).

Idina Menzel had an adoring fan long before she became famous for being the voice of Elsa in *Frozen*, and Elphaba in *Wicked*, even before she was Maureen in *Rent*: her little sister, Cara. In this loving memoir, Cara Mentzel details her relationship with Idina, including moving accounts of her being at her sister's side at Broadway opening nights and awards ceremonies; she also tells her own story.

Top 10 Arts Books

These outstanding art books reviewed in *Booklist* over the past 12 months cast light on film and television history, musical innovation and pop triumphs, and a long-cloaked force in surrealism. —*Donna Seaman*

American Noir Film: From The Maltese Falcon to Gone Girl. By M. Keith Booker. 2024. Rowman & Littlefield, $45 (9781538194096).

Booker's riveting history tracks American film noir from the influence of exiled German filmmakers and French critics through the now-classic first wave to neo-noir films, such as *Chinatown* in 1974, and revisionary noirs, including *Basic Instinct* (1992).

Black in Blues: How a Color Tells the Story of My People. By Imani Perry. 2025. Ecco, $28.99 (9780062977397).

Perry offers an impressionistic cultural history of the African diaspora through its connections to the color blue in music, dance, folklore, art, and literature.

Burning Down the House: Talking Heads and the New York Scene That Transformed Rock. By Jonathan Gould. 2025. Mariner, $35 (9780063022980).

Gould begins this finely detailed history of an era-defining band in June 1975, when Talking Heads made its professional debut at CBGB on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Carson the Magnificent. By Bill Zehme and Mike Thomas. 2024. Simon & Schuster, $30 (9781451645279).

Zehme and Thomas offer a richly researched portrait of the legendary host of *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, who was at the helm from 1962 to 1992 and was beloved for his disarming charm and sardonic humor.

Desi Arnaz: The Man Who Invented Television. By Todd S. Purdum. 2025. Simon & Schuster, $29.99 (9781668023068).

Purdum gives gifted performer and comedian Arnaz his due as a savvy businessman and bold artistic innovator who helped shape the early days of television, most significantly with the revolutionary, still-cherished 1950s comedy *I Love Lucy*.

Hit Girls: Britney, Taylor, Beyoncé, and the Women Who Built Pop's Shiniest Decade. By Nora Princiotti. 2025. Ballantine, $29 (9780593725085).

Princiotti explores how major technological and social shifts in the 2000s led to women artists, for once, comprising over half of the 25 top-grossing performers.

Lorne: The Man Who Invented Saturday Night Live. By Susan Morrison. 2025. Random, $36 (9780812988871).

Saturday Night Live is a veritable institution, inspiring Morrison to incisively portray the powerful man behind it all, the brilliant, enigmatic, and influential Lorne Michaels.

Sublime Light: Tapestry Art of DY Begay. Ed. by Cécile R. Ganteaume and Jennifer McLerran. 2024. Smithsonian, $50 (9781588347565).

A fluency in color and "reverence for life" distinguishes the fiber creations of renowned Diné artist Begay, a fifth-generation weaver, whose tapestries and life are illuminated in this beautiful volume.

Surreal: The Extraordinary Life of Gala Dalí. By Michèle Gerber Klein. 2025. Harper, $32 (9780063220577).

As Klein documents in this landmark biography, Salvador Dalí would not have been an international sensation without his more-sophisticated wife, manager, muse, and soulmate, Gala.

This Is Rhythm: Ella Jenkins, Children's Music, and the Long Civil Rights Movement. By Gayle F. Wald. 2025. Univ. of Chicago, $27.50 (9780226824819).

Wald recounts the singular life of Ella Jenkins (1924–2024), beloved "First Lady of Children's Music" and civil rights activist who revolutionized children's music and music education.

Continued from p.25

poser Edvard Grieg responds brusquely to a curious fan, insisting that he "has no method when composing!" And Woody Guthrie shares his philosophy with musicologist Alan Lomax, "Music is some kind of electricity that makes a radio out of a man and his dial is in his head and he just sings accurately to how he's a feeling." Reproductions of select letters add to the pleasure of reading this well-curated collection. —*Freda Love Smith*

Hell's Kitchen: Behind the Dream.

By Alicia Keys and Lise Funderburg.

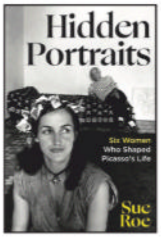
Oct. 2025. 240p. illus. Plume, $42 (9798217176809); e-book (9798217176816). 782.1.

An intimate, backstage view of the creation, production, and performance of the hit Broadway jukebox musical *Hell's Kitchen* is featured in this new and varied collection by singer-songwriter Keys and journalist and memoirist Funderburg. A combination of firsthand accounts, photographs, and lyrics from the show's dynamic songs is beautifully presented as the history of the vibrant, critically acclaimed musical, which debuted on Broadway in 2024, and is traced from Keys' initial ideas to its opening night. Keys' unique upbringing in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood of Manhattan in a building renowned for housing many future artists and stars is the inspiration for the story and makes for an absorbing plot, as the main character, Ali, shares both a name and background with the composer. Throughout this compelling volume, the joys and challenges of artistic collaboration and the realization of a complex creative endeavor are charmingly rendered. Give to fans of Keys' music, theater buffs, and anyone interested in the fascinating world of theatrical production. —*Allison Escoto*

★ Hidden Portraits: Six Women Who Shaped Picasso's Life.

By Sue Roe.

Nov. 2025. 304p. illus. Norton, $35 (9781324076407); e-book (9781324076414). 759.4.

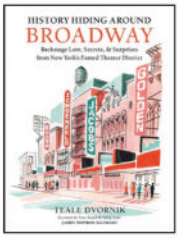


Picasso would not have been an international sensation without the six significant women in his life. So asserts Roe (*In Montparnasse*, 2019) in her latest foray into the indelible art world of twentieth-century Paris. She devotes a section to each—Fernande Olivier, Olga Khokhlova, Marie-Thérèse Walter, Dora Maar, Françoise Gilot, and Jacqueline Roque—documenting in vivid and affecting specificity their difficult childhoods, courageous pursuit of freer lives, distinct temperaments, varied callings, and relationships with Picasso. But their stories are painfully entangled because Picasso conducted simultaneous affairs, leading to heartache and anguished confrontations. Roe tracks each woman's profound influence on the protean artist's ceaseless quest and immense, ever-evolving oeuvre. Fernande loved to read, write, and paint, and wrote a memoir that enraged Picasso. Olga was a dancer with the Ballets Russes, had Picasso's first son, and married the artist. Young, athletic Marie-Thérèse had no interest in art but loved Picasso and had his daughter. Photographer and artist Dora collaborated with Picasso during the *Guernica* era and painted long after. Lifelong artist Françoise had a son and daughter with Picasso and wrote about her experience in *Life with Picasso* (1964). Much-younger Jacqueline became his doting second wife and his widow. Roe sets each of their engrossing stories, some tragic, within the encompassing context of war, artistic innovation, and social change. —*Donna Seaman*

History Hiding around Broadway: Backstage Lore, Secrets & Surprises from New York's Famed Theater District.

By Teale Dvornik.

Nov. 2025. 200p. illus. Running Press, $25 (9780762489107); e-book (9780762489114). 792.09.

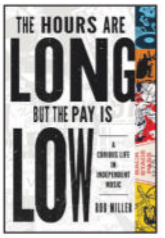


When someone knows every nook and cranny of a city's most iconic buildings and can recall arcane details about its most exciting industry faster than an AI search engine, then that person should write a book. Which is exactly what theater tour guide Dvornik, aka the Backstage Blonde, has done. Dvornik started amassing this wealth of knowledge when she began working at 24 on Broadway as a costumer for some of the theater's biggest shows with actors who were both at the peak of their careers and others just climbing the ladder. Anyone who has ever taken a narrated tour—be it of museum, historic site, or architectural wonder—knows that the prowess and personality of the guide makes all the difference in the world. The best are informative without being pedantic, lively without being effusive. So it is with Dvornik's behind-the-proscenium-curtain view of Broadway. Adapted from her own tour scripts, Dvornik's microhistory teases out the granular technicalities that make each of the 41 buildings in Manhattan's theater district unique, while sidebars teem with fascinating factoids sure to delight even the most die-hard theater buffs. Like Tony Award–winning plays themselves, Dvornik's standing-ovation-worthy history will leave readers shouting, "Brava!" —*Carol Haggas*

The Hours Are Long, but the Pay Is Low: A Curious Life in Independent Music.

By Rob Miller.

Nov. 2025. 304p. illus. Univ. of Illinois/3 Fields, paper, $24.95 (9780252088964); e-book (9780252048401). 781.64.

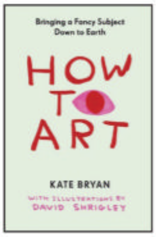


Rob Miller loves music. We know because he admits it in the first line of this rollicking memoir about Bloodshot, the indie record label he cofounded in 1993. Bloodshot championed music that, as he writes, "lurked between genres and under the radar" while embracing a DIY ethic. Miller's first job in the music business was at a record shop in Birmingham, Michigan; "It felt like I was part of something." The idea to start a record label came later, specifically, on a winter evening in a Chicago tavern when Miller wrote down on a "soggy" napkin the names of bands he wanted to sign if he had the chance. Its roster would consist of artists that no one else was interested in. Miller, Eric Babcock, and Nan Warshaw each chipped in $2,000 and, as Miller writes: "POOF we were a label." Over the years they snared the likes of Robbie Fulks, Jon Langford, Kelly Hogan, and Neko Case. Although full of references to Chicago bars and clubs (Phyllis' Musical Inn, Lounge Ax), Miller's compulsively readable memoir, which even has fun footnotes, is also the story of the golden age of indie labels and thus should appeal to everyone interested in the music industry. —*June Sawyers*

How to Art: Bringing a Fancy Subject Down to Earth.

By Kate Bryan.

2025. 328p. illus. Workman, $25 (9781523534180); e-book (9781523534197). 700.



Bryan (*Bright Stars*, 2021), a first-generation college student who stumbled into art history, experienced impostor syndrome as a new hire at the British Museum. Now an art curator and British TV broadcaster, Bryan believes that art is for everybody, and her latest book is a field guide that welcomes lifelong art lovers, skeptics, and newbies alike. Organized into five sections, the book tackles the question "what is art?" via a brief recap of art history, provides questions to consider when looking at a work of art, encourages the reader to experiment with making art, and demystifies the process of buying and displaying art in one's own home. Alongside David Shrigley's colorful illustrations, Bryan mixes insider tips with wry humor and boundless enthusiasm, whether she's walking the reader through a visit to an iconic artwork like the Mona Lisa or explaining the nuances of art pricing. For those interested in becoming artists, Bryan devotes the final section to practical advice about the business of art. For those intimidated by art galleries, unsure about framing art for display at home, or even seeking permission not to like a popular artist, this book contains something for everyone. Recommended for public libraries of all sizes. —*Lindsay Harmon*

Insomnia.

By Robbie Robertson.

Nov. 2025. 288p. Crown, $32 (9781524763107); e-book (9781524763121). 787.87.

Robertson's best-selling first memoir, *Testimony* (2016), covered the songwriter and guitarist's early years and groundbreaking collaborations with Ronnie Hawkins, the Band, and Bob Dylan. *Insomnia* picks up in 1976, following the Band's farewell concert, immortalized in *The Last Waltz*, directed by Martin Scorsese. With both his band and marriage collapsing, Robertson moves into Scorsese's Hollywood home. Two dizzying years ensue as the pair install blackout shades, watch classic Hollywood films, edit *The Last Waltz*, attend glittering premieres, and court glamorous women. Long nights are fueled by cocaine and cases of wine sent by Francis Ford Coppola, who also, alarmed by their gaunt appearances, hires a private chef for them. Eventually, exhaustion and excess land Scorsese in the hospital, which ends the friends' epic bender. He emerges in time to make *Raging Bull*, while Robertson discovers a new career as an esteemed music supervisor and songwriter for film. A vivid portrait of two artists burning bright and, against the odds, not burning out. —*Freda Love Smith*

It Girl: The Life and Legacy of Jane Birkin.

By Marisa Meltzer.

Oct. 2025. 224p. Atria, $28 (9781668060285); e-book (9781668060308). 709.2.

The name Jane Birkin brings to mind luxury handbags, iconic fashion, and tumultuous romances. Yet Jane Birkin herself was an actress, singer, artist, and mother who wished to be known on her own, for her own work. Meltzer (*Glossy*, 2023) traces Birkin's life from her early years in England, where she became known for her striking fashion sense and stage acting. Birkin's three major romantic partners, John Barry, Serge Gainsbourg, and Jacques Doillon, all approached her as a creative muse. Gainsbourg wrote songs for her, including the risqué hit duet that catapulted her music career, "Je T'aime . . . Moi Non Plus." As she aged, Birkin sought ways to define her career for herself, not as an ingenue inspiring a man. Her own film work and writing blossomed in her later career, and she continued to perform until nearly her final days. Bringing together diverse sources from Birkin's performances, interviews, and her diaries, Meltzer gives readers insight into the complex woman Jane Birkin was. *It Girl* is a remarkable portrait of an iconic figure. —*Laura Chanoux*

YA/S: *A great biography for YAs interested in 1960s culture and its enduring impact. LC.*

Joan Crawford: A Woman's Face.

By Scott Eyman.

Nov. 2025. 480p. Simon & Schuster, $31 (9781668047309); e-book (9781668047323). 791.43.

Eyman (*John Wayne*, 2014) adds to his list of top-flight biographies with this portrait of one of Hollywood's giants. Like his previous books, this one is based on both original research and interviews with people who knew the subject. Crawford's is a wonderful life story, chronicling the actor's early years (she came out of abject poverty); her rise to stardom (she was a brilliant self-promoter); the decline of her career and its stunning revival with her Oscar-winning role as Mildred Pierce; and her later years, with image-shattering roles in films such as *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* and *Strait-Jacket*. The author also explores Crawford's personal life: she was married several times, and disinherited her two eldest children, whose relationship with their mother was rather tumultuous. As usual, Eyman handles this element of the story with compassion and respect. The book will get attention because it's a stellar biography centered on Crawford, but its real selling point is Eyman himself: he's a superb writer, and he turns Joan Crawford, movie star, into a living, breathing human being. —*David Pitt*

Life's Little Surprises.

By Rubén Blades.

Nov. 2025. 352p. illus. Knopf, $30 (9780593318058); e-book (9780593318065). 782.42.

Nowadays, Panama City–born Rubén Blades is known as a well-respected musician, singer, composer, actor, and activist. But during New York's bad old days in the mid-1970s, Blades was a gofer in the mail room for Fania Records while he was still on a tourist visa. He played salsa, working with trombonist and band leader Willie Colón, recorded a duet with Linda Ronstadt, and collaborated with Sting, Elvis Costello, and Lou Reed. Having earned two law degrees—one from the University of Panama, the other from Harvard—politics and social justice issues have always been important to Blades. In this soulful account of a complicated life, he writes eloquently about race in his native Panama, lamenting that the "apparent whiteness of a person's skin" is still considered as sign of "social or economic superiority," the machinations of the Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega, and the controversy over his 1981 song "Tiburón," when he was accused of being a communist sympathizer. Blades has strong opinions on the price of fame, "I think the artist owes what they are to themselves, not to the public." —*June Sawyers*

Making Mary Poppins: The Sherman Brothers, Walt Disney, and the Creation of a Classic Film.

By Todd James Pierce.

Nov. 2025. 240p. Norton, $29.99 (9781324111078); e-book (9781324111085). 791.43.

This heart-warming account details how *Mary Poppins*, Walt Disney's classic 1964 movie musical about an English nanny, came to be, especially through the contributions of its songwriting duo, Bob and Dick Sherman, who went on to create other iconic songs for the company. The Sherman Brothers, whom Walt referred to as "the Boys," played with sing-songy words even as children and were largely influenced by their optimistic, songwriting father. After touching on each brother's personal history, Pierce takes readers through their joint career, demonstrating how their early musical work on *Mary Poppins* would become the foundation for the final script. Pierce then relates fascinating, behind-the-scenes stories about the film's production and post-production process, including the casting of Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke; author P. L. Travers' infamous contentions with Walt Disney; and the technology used to combine live-action acting with animation. Part the-making-of and part biography, this anecdote-filled book reveals that there's no one right path to commercial success in the arts. At the close, readers will feel even more connected to this beloved movie. —*Biz Hyzy*

The Mighty Avengers vs. the 1970s.

By Paul Cornell.

Nov. 2025. 120p. illus. Bloomsbury Academic, paper, $14.95 (9798765131800); e-book (9798765131794). 741.5.

This scholarly work shows that even superheroes who never seem to age must still evolve with the times. Before the Avengers jump-started the Marvel movies, they were the stars of a long-running comic book series featuring heroes who usually had their own titles but banded together when certain threats were too big for just one hero to handle. The Avengers' roster included the likes of Captain America, Hulk, Iron Man, and Hawkeye, and managed to provide an ever-evolving lens into the current zeitgeist thanks to writers like Steve Engleheart and Jim Shooter. Cornell turns a critical eye toward several writers and their contributions to the heroes' stories and comic storytelling in general, particularly focusing on how the writers and the story lines changed as the 1970s progressed. Though ostensibly an academic work, Cornell keeps the tone light while featuring colorful comic panels to illustrate his points. Fans of superhero history and creatives interested in how history influences art should travel back with Cornell into this decade of Avengers history (and drama). —*James Gardner*

Pre-Code Essentials: Must-See Cinema from Hollywood's Untamed Era, 1930–1934.

By Kim Luperi and Danny Reid.

Oct. 2025. 256p. illus. Running Press, paper, $25.99 (9798894140551); e-book (9798894140575). 791.43.

Though the Motion Picture Production Code was adopted in 1930, it was not enforced in earnest until 1934, leaving censorship up to state and local boards and allowing filmmakers relative creative freedom. The 50 films presented in *Pre-Code Essentials* push the envelope in different ways, taking on controversial subjects like sex, economic unrest, and racism (though mostly sex). The film profiles include descriptions of plot, a bit of production history, and censors' demands for changes or cuts. From the war-is-hell classic, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, to Cecil B. DeMille's bewildering *Madame Satan* to vehicles for Paul Robeson (e.g., *The Emperor Jones*) and Mae West (*I'm No Angel*), these movies represent a variety of genres and styles. But all courted controversy, inadvertently or not. Too much of a hint of leg, for example, could rile censors as much as a sympathetic portrayal of an abused chain-gang member. With black-and-white film stills and full-color posters, this addictively readable compendium will appeal to film aficionados and novices alike. —*Susan Maguire*

Pretty, Pretty, Pretty Good: Larry David and the Making of Seinfeld and Curb Your Enthusiasm. Rev. ed.

By Josh Levine.

Oct. 2025. 312p. illus. ECW, paper, $19.95 (9781770418370). 791.45.

The original edition of this book was published in 2010, but this new edition has been extensively revised and updated. In many ways, it's an entirely new book, and for fans of *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, it is spectacular. *Pretty, Pretty, Pretty Good* is several things at once: a detailed chronicle of the making of those two legendary television comedies; an in-depth exploration of creator Larry David's creative process and his post-*Curb* work in television and on stage; and a shrewd appraisal of *Seinfeld* and *Curb*'s positions in popular culture. Levine, who's also written books about Jerry Seinfeld, television producer David E. Kelley, and filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen, is clearly a fan of Larry David and his work, but this is no geek-out fanboy book. It's a serious study of two classic television comedies and the man who created them, written by someone who has the critical faculties and storytelling skills to captivate readers. Anyone who has read the original edition should still read this new version, and those who haven't read the original should certainly seek this one out. —*David Pitt*

★ Rewinding the '80s: Cinema under the Influence of Music Videos, Action Stars, and a Cold War.

By John Malahy.

Oct. 2025. 288p. illus. Running Press, paper, $25.99 (9780762489664); e-book (9780762489671). 791.43.

Malahy (*Summer Movies*, 2021) aims his cinematic eye toward a decade marked by its generation-defining blockbusters as well as its share of messy misfires. The rise of home video, coupled with the corporatization of the industry, shifted the landscape toward the commercial. Malahy covers the gamut of what made 1980s film an indelible period, from the teen-movie boom to Hollywood's Cold War fascination to the rise of alternative cinema. While *Rewinding the '80s* can act as a semiexhaustive compendium of a decade's worth of film, there is also a narrative thrust that develops as Malahy charts the shift from the auteur-driven artistry of the 1970s to more splashy and popular fare like *E.T.* and *Beverly Hills Cop*. While Malahy touches on the prototypical examples (*Ghostbusters*, Tom Cruise, the Brat Pack, and the decade-capping *Batman*),

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REWINDING THE '80s
CINEMA UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF MUSIC VIDEOS, ACTION STARS, AND A COLD WAR
JOHN MALAHY

he also covers the impact of world cinema and, while still marginalized, the contributions of female and BIPOC filmmakers. He manages to touch on hundreds of films while still creating a rich throughline of a defining decade at the multiplex. *Rewinding the '80s* like totally takes it to 11 on the nostalgia scale, showcasing why we've yet to put away our legwarmers and Aviators. —*Jeff Connelly*

> **YA/S:** *Teen cinephiles will appreciate this easy-to-digest compilation representing what would be, for them, "old Hollywood." JC.*

The Royal We.

By Roddy Bottum.

Nov. 2025. 256p. Akashic, $27.95 (9781636142692); e-book (9781636142708). 782.42.

Bottum, keyboardist for the alternative metal band Faith No More and later guitarist and vocalist for indie pop band Imperial Teen, moved to San Francisco for the weather. He was tired of the "constancy of sunny day after sunny day after sunny day" of his native Los Angeles. But what appealed to him most about San Francisco was its geographical isolation, a peninsula masquerading as a city enveloped by fog. It is where, as he writes, he found his tribe and they found him, revolving around various kinds of "mischief" and the thrill of "breaking rules in the dark." The only thing he and his friends took seriously was music; in particular, English bands like Joy Division and Killing Joke. A film student at the San Francisco State University, he was particularly inspired by noncommercial films (from Brakhage to Warhol) before returning to music. A dark, candid, well-written memoir of gay life as a punk musician with tales of drugs, a stint in rehab, camaraderie among friends, and, hanging over it all, the pallor of inevitable death and decay. —*June Sawyers*

Rumors of My Demise.

By Evan Dando and Jim Ruland.

Oct. 2025. 304p. Gallery, $30 (9781982175221); e-book (9781982175245). 782.4216.

During the 1970s, Martha's Vineyard was an intellectual mecca. Just consider the authors who lived there over the years—Judy Blume, Roald Dahl, Jules Feiffer, Maurice Sendak, and Shel Silverstein. So says Lemonheads frontman Evan Dando. As a self-proclaimed country mouse, Dando should know. He is a former resident. But he really came to the Vineyard to kick his heroin habit. Then he realized he had to leave the island to save himself from himself. Fate is an important theme in his story. If, for example, his father hadn't abandoned the family or if Dando hadn't flunked his freshman year of high school (he loved reading but never did his homework), the Lemonheads would never have happened. Fortunately, he had an ear for melody even as young as two years old. By the time he was "ten or eleven," he began playing guitar "in earnest." Ultimately, it led to a career in music even though he initially wanted to be a writer. Now, with backup from Jim Ruland, he is. An enjoyable prance through one rock star's unexpected life. —*June Sawyers*

Scene.

By Abel Ferrara.

Oct. 2025. 272p. illus. Simon & Schuster, $29 (9781668097670); e-book (9781668097694). 791.43.

Abel Ferrara is one of the most interesting film directors currently making films. He's made independent movies, studio productions, and hardcore pornography (his first film was a 1976 movie with a title best left unspecified here). His neo-noir filmmaking style is often imitated, although never duplicated; he makes movies his way, and he doesn't do it for the money, leading to some of his movies becoming classics or cult favorites (e.g. *King of New York,* 1990). Ferrara's new autobiography, *Scene*, is brutally honest—it's almost painful to read some of the passages in the book because he's exploring such painful times in his life—and absolutely impossible to put down. His personal life was tumultuous, although it's relatively peaceful now; if Ferrara had made a movie about a filmmaker with substance abuse who frequently seemed to be one or two steps away from some sort of life-ending catastrophe, it would probably feel pretty much like how this book feels. It's the kind of "celebrity memoir" we rarely see: one that shows its author in an unvarnished light, holding nothing back. A remarkable life story, brilliantly told. —*David Pitt*

Scriptnotes: A Book about Screenwriting and Things That Are Interesting to Screenwriters.

By John August and Craig Mazin.

Dec. 2025. 352p. Crown, $32 (9780593728062). 808.2.

Screenwriters August (*Aladdin*, *Big Fish*) and Mazin (*Chernobyl*, *The Last of Us*) distill 14 years of their hit *Scriptnotes* podcast into a handy guide aimed primarily at those looking to break into show business and craving an up-to-date introduction to the craft of writing for movies and television. The pair begins by presenting 20 basic rules for screenwriting, and reveal how many of them are broken for a script's benefit. They walk writers through character and scene work while acknowledging that some things, like good dialogue, can't be taught. They acknowledge the difficulty of maintaining a career as a screenwriter, noting that success often comes down to the ability to write quickly and compellingly and that luck plays a role. Aspiring screenwriters will appreciate the basics, while more experienced scribes will find wisdom from the included interviews with successful writers such as Christopher Nolan, Mike Schur, Sam Esmail, Damon Lindelof, Aline Brosh McKenna, Ashley Nicole Black, and other luminaries. Bound to be a staple, this guide, just like the podcast, is accessible, engaging, and informative. —*Kristine Huntley*

> **YA/S:** *Teens with an interest in screenwriting, or narrative writing of any kind, will find this instructive and easily digestible. KH.*

Stephen Sondheim's Sweeney Todd: Behind the Bloody Musical Masterpiece.

By Rick Pender.

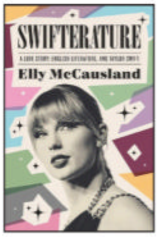
Oct. 2025. 240p. illus. Bloomsbury Academic, $34 (9781538196441); e-book (9781538196458). 782.1.

Despite its unlikely (and unseemly) subject (the gruesome story of a serial killer), many people consider *Sweeney Todd* one of the best musicals ever. Sondheim expert Pender concurs and explains why in this rich and comprehensive look at nearly every aspect of the Tony Award–winning show, from its origins in a Victorian "penny dreadful," *The String of Pearls* (1846), to its original Broadway production, subsequent revivals, recordings, and a big-screen adaptation. In lively and insightful prose, he limns productions and profiles players, including Len Cariou, Angela Lansbury, Victor Garber, and Sarah Rice, and members of the creative team, including director Hal Prince, orchestrator Jonathan Tunick, and musical director Paul Gemignani. Here, too, are critical assessments of productions, a consideration of the show's cultural impact, a look at *Sweeney Todd* productions around the world, and song-by-song commentary, all capped off by extensive notes. Musical theater buffs, Sondheim admirers, and horror fans will surely want to attend to this tale of *Sweeney Todd*. —*Carolyn Mulac*

★ Swifterature: A Love Story: English Literature and Taylor Swift.

By Elly McCausland.

Nov. 2025. 304p. Pegasus, $29.95 (9781639369898); e-book (9781639369904). 782.4216.



McCausland, who teaches a popular course on Swift at Ghent University in Belgium, takes a deep dive into the symbolism, literary references, and double meanings in Swift's music. Arranging her book thematically, McCausland highlights recurring motifs in Swift's songs, from grief to courtly love to madwomen. She unpacks Swift's literary deep dives, exploring references to such classic literary works as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, such Romantic writers as Wordsworth and Coleridge, imperiled women in Gothic literature, and various poetic traditions, including elegies and medieval ballads. In exploring the brilliance of Swift's work, McCausland notes the way female writers are treated far differently from their male counterparts. Rarely labeled geniuses, subversive women are derided, judged for their sexuality, and often have their passions deemed "hysterical." McCausland isn't uncritical of Swift, noting how Swift's capitalistic tendencies clash with her appreciation of the natural world and how her feminism and activism are usually limited to direct injuries against her and exclude larger political issues and the plight of women who are not white and privileged. For the legions of Swifties who long for their idol to be given her due for the depth and breadth of her songwriting, this is a delightfully comprehensive and wholly entertaining look at the literary dimensions of Swift's oeuvre. —*Kristine Huntley*

> **YA/S:** *Teen Swifties will appreciate how the works they're reading in their English literature classes have informed their favorite artist's songs. KH.*

Swiz.

By Swiz.

Oct. 2025. 256p. illus. Akashic, paper, $25 (9781636142654). 781.66.

Swiz blends oral history, scrapbook, and journal to chronicle the late 1980s Washington, DC, hardcore punk band fronted by Shawn Brown, formerly of Dag Nasty. Packed with childhood and band photos, flyers, lyrics, journal excerpts, interviews, comics, poetry, and even a list of rejected band names, the book captures both the sound and the scene. Swiz emerged in reaction to the more melodic turn DC punk was taking. "I just wanted to thrash," says Brown. Early shows and shifting lineups gave way to touring in a minivan borrowed from guitarist Jason Farrell's dad, DIY silkscreening on the backs of sweaty fans, and navigating the country with a gunk-smeared map. The band played squats, cornfields, and all-ages venues where kids "shook & swam & dove & went out of their minds." As the hardcore scene solidified into a "tough-guy oriented . . . boys' club," and internal tensions grew, Swiz flamed out. Fans of hardcore punk will cherish this vivid, raw portrait of youth in full thrash. —*Freda Love Smith*

Taylor's Version: The Poetic and Musical Genius of Taylor Swift.

By Stephanie Burt.

Oct. 2025. 352p. Basic, $30 (9781541606234); e-book (9781541606258). 782.42.

Harvard professor Burt, who teaches a popular course on Swift's music, offers a guided tour through Swift's albums and what makes her work so popular and relatable. In exploring Swift's massive cross-generational appeal, she points out the aspirational quality of most of Swift's songs even as they evolve from lamenting unpopularity in school and trying to mold herself to please a crush to the pressures of living life in the spotlight and trying to find love with the eyes of the world on her. Burt notes that the genius of Swift's music lies in the language and melodies she uses to make it resonate with those who love and see themselves in her music and the way she has always worked to invite people in rather than shut them out. Burt largely stays away from gossip about Swift's life, though she doesn't eschew controversy, such as when she analyzes what Swift borrows from Black music on *Reputation* and the way her whiteness has worked to her benefit. A smart, thoughtful, and thoroughly engaging entry for anyone looking for a deep dive into Swift's music. —*Kristine Huntley*

> **YA/S:** *Teen Swifties will find much to enjoy here, and the musically inclined will especially appreciate Burt's analysis of Swift's music and lyrics. KH.*

This Year: 365 Songs Annotated; A Book of Days.

By John Darnielle.

Dec. 2025. 560p. MCD, $36 (9780374606497); e-book (9780374606503). 782.42.

In the preface, singer, songwriter, and novelist Darnielle distinguishes between writing a book and making one. This one, he says, is made, assembled. The author of *Wolf in White Van* (2014), *Universal Harvester* (2017), and *Devil House* (2022) and front man for the Mountain Goats arranges selections from his vast song catalog to create a book of days, each set of lyrics paired with a thoughtful annotation. These entries unfold as essayistic meditations on the creative process, artistic influences, biography, and recurring themes—classical mythology, baseball, religion, divorce, and friendship. Together they sketch a loose history of the Mountain Goats, and though Darnielle resists calling this a memoir, an impressionistic self-portrait emerges. A song for baseball star Roger Maris, he explains, is "about the pressure of increasing success in the public eye." Other songs grapple with the suicide of a friend; "Eulogies aren't mirrors," he insists, "but they have shards of mirror attached to them." Fans will find not only beloved classics here but also unreleased and unfinished pieces, "cast-offs and latter-round draft picks who never made the team." —*Freda Love Smith*

Uncharted Territory: What Numbers Tell Us about the Biggest Hit Songs and Ourselves.

By Chris Dalla Riva.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Bloomsbury Academic, $34.95 (9798765149843); e-book (9798765149911). 782.42.

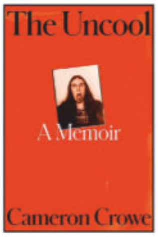
Musician and data analyst Dalla Riva loves statistics. After listening to every song at the top of the Billboard Hot 100 lists in chronological order, he presents them here according to "eras." The first is from August 4, 1958, the start of the list, to June 19, 1961. The last era begins on April 13, 2019, and ends on January 11, 2025. From Pat Boone's rendition of "Moody River" to Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road," Dalla Riva looks at the hits through both musical and historical lenses. It's a fun way to approach the subject. Given the author's analytical mind, the book is full of charts, from the percentage of number one hits without vocals to measuring the lyrical complexity of number one hits to the percentage of number one hits with explicit lyrics. Each section includes Highlights and Lowlights. *Uncharted Territory* is a quirky way to look at music, and clearly a massive amount of thought and research went into it. Just the ticket for those who love music and numbers. —*June Sawyers*

★ The Uncool.

By Cameron Crowe.

Oct. 2025. 352p. illus. Simon & Schuster/Avid Reader, $35 (9781668059432); (9781668059456). 791.43.

Academy Award–winning Crowe's films include *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Say Anything*, *Jerry Maguire*, *We Bought a Zoo*, and most relevantly here, the semi-autobiographical *Almost Famous*. His riveting memoir tells the true story. In 1973, Crowe was a teenage journalist whose innocence, wit, and curiosity opened improbable doors to rock's most elusive figures. At 15, he landed a *Rolling Stone* cover story on the Allman Brothers just after they'd sworn off the magazine. The following year, he charmed David Bowie into a rare interview. *The Uncool* captures the qualities that made such feats possible. Crowe's eye for detail brings every subject fully to life, as in his portrait of Gram Parsons—patched knee, smooth hands, and the "air of a well-educated, stony young prince." His gift for narrative turns a tense encounter—Gregg Allman demanding Crowe's interview tapes—into a gripping tale. Most essentially, Crowe's patience and attentiveness—qualities nurtured by his eccentric and loving family—let him see past celebrity to the human being. Still fueled by the awe of a 15-year-old fan decades later, Crowe delivers a memoir that is both a backstage pass to rock 'n' roll and a master class in storytelling, warm, vivid, and irresistibly uncool in the best way. —*Freda Love Smith*



> **YA/S:** *Teens interested in music and writing about the arts will find Crowe's account of his early adventures in journalism inspiring and entertaining. FLS.*

Vagabond.

By Tim Curry.

Oct. 2025. 304p. illus. Grand Central, $32 (9780306835841); e-book (9780306835865). 792.5.

Curry looks back at a half-century on stage and screen in a witty and candid account of his life and career. It is not, he tells us in no uncertain terms, a Hollywood tell-all, a master class in acting, or a lurid account of love affairs. Instead, it's a collection of stories about the amazing variety of roles he's played, including Dr. Frank-N-Furter in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, King Arthur in *Spamalot*, Tristan Tzara in *Travesties*, Mozart in *Amadeus*, Pennywise in *It*, and Rooster Hannigan in *Annie*. Curry is one of those actors who will tell you that playing a villain is more fun than playing a hero. Later in his career he made a switch to voicing animated films and television programs and series. In 2012, he suffered a catastrophic stroke, and now does voice work almost exclusively. In conclusion, he notes that being a vagabond is "about adopting a certain attitude toward life." That sums up this delightful memoir in a nutshell. Film and theater fans will find this a rollicking read. —*Carolyn Mulac*

HD **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Curry's iconic characters have captured generations of movie-goers' imaginations; so will his first book.

Adult Fiction

General Fiction

The Burning Origin.

By Daniele Mencarelli. Tr. by Octavian MacEwen.

Nov. 2025. 192p. Europa, paper, $18 (9798889661429).

Gabriele, a young architect and designer in Milan who has been away from his family and his working-class neighborhood in Rome for years, comes home to celebrate his parents' fortieth anniversary. He is quickly enfolded back into the family—but Gabriele is uncomfortable, because he has been hiding who he is for years, and he has no intention of telling anyone. Immediately smothered by love from his mother and faced with tentative questions from his sister and a surprise visit from childhood friends, Gabriele struggles to fit back in with his family and friends as well as with telling those he loves who he has become. Mencarelli's prose is, unlike his protagonist, straightforward and wrenching, allowing the reader to identify deeply with a man who is realizing that going home again is impossible without accepting the changes in oneself and allowing one's family to change too. Mencarelli's themes of acceptance, discrimination, and what home really means will resonate with readers in this incredible new book by the author of *The House of Gazes* (2023). —*Lily Hunter*

Clementine Crane Prefers Not To.

By Kristin Bair.

Oct. 2025. 320p. Crooked Lane/Alcove, $29.99 (9798892423250); paper, $19.99 (9781639101108); e-book (9781639101115).

The onset of perimenopause is the final straw for Clementine Crane, who can no longer swallow the demands of her family, the lack of attention from her doctor, or the refusal of her bosses at the library to change her job title (granted, Connector of People to Magical Things seems like a bit of a long shot). Taking a cue from Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener," she begins responding to any and all requests with "I prefer not to," a change that eventually leads to stealing the library's goldfish, posting her hot flashes to TikTok, and inspiring a movement of women determined to recapture their souls. The zeal that fuels Clementine's individual growth is somewhat lacking in her relationships with her family. Still, Bair (*Agatha Arch Is Afraid of Everything*, 2020) captures Clementine's journey with humor, and it's hard not to cheer for her as she takes back control of her life. Readers who enjoy the snark of Laurie Gelman's Class Mom series and the spirit of Maria Semple's *Where'd You Go Bernadette* (2012), or just find Clem's journey to be familiar, will have great fun. —*Tracy Babiasz*

Days at the Torunka Café.

By Satoshi Yagisawa. Tr. by Erik Ozawa.

Nov. 2025. 240p. HarperPerennial, paper, $17.99 (9780063445857).

Welcome to the Torunka Café, named after the Czech artist, puppet maker, illustrator, and film animator Jiři Trnka (Torunka approximates the Japanese pronunciation), a favorite of the café owner and his wife. Located in a quiet, hard-to-find corner of bustling Tokyo, the café draws regulars who return for an individually prepared and perfect cup of coffee and to enjoy the welcoming light and soft Chopin études and savor conversation and connection. Three heartstring-tugging narratives launch Yagisawa's gratifying new series. Chinatsu, a ballerina and origami-folding young woman, mysteriously claims to have been past-life lovers with befuddled café employee Shūichi. Middle-aged Numata, suffering a debilitating illness, returns to where he was happiest in his youth and meets vibrant Ayako, the daughter of his abandoned beloved. Unexpectedly falling in love helps Shizuku, the owner's 17-year-old daughter, find a delicate peace after losing her older sister six years ago. As he so successfully achieved in his Morisaki Bookshop titles, Yagisawa creates another comforting refuge where lost souls can find one another. Literary author Ozawa returns to translate, clearly absorbing the gentle kindness so abundantly ingrained here. —*Terry Hong*

> **YA:** *Older teens will surely find empathic resonance among the many youthful characters facing both quotidian and life-changing challenges. TH.*

The Devil Is a Southpaw.

By Brandon Hobson.

Oct. 2025. 352p. illus. Ecco, $29 (9780063259652); e-book (9780063259669).

Hobson (*The Removed*, 2021) introduces this tale as a manuscript sent to him by Milton Muleborn, a markedly verbose account of their time at a juvenile detention facility in rural Oklahoma in the late 1980s. The horrific torments, grandstanding speeches, and violence inflicted by the guards are also experienced by Matthew Echota, a talented Cherokee artist Milton knows from school. Milton envies and reveres Matthew, and the narrative centers on Milton exploring his obsession. With flickers of supernatural moments punctuating the first two-thirds of the narrative, it shifts for a period into a surreal, abject world reminiscent of Samuel Delany's *Dhalgren* (1975) or the magical realist episodes of Murakami. We then join Milton years later. He's still using a remarkable and often comically huge vocabulary and is still evidently jealous of Matthew's success as he considers his deep admiration for Matthew, his difficult life, and his own unreliability as a narrator. Featuring numerous original pieces of art, Hobson's novel is a moving, propulsive box of surprises that explores state violence, mental illness, religion, and the long-lasting traumas of incarceration. —*Alexander Moran*

Estate.

By Cynthia Zarin.

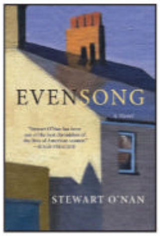
Nov. 2025. 144p. Farrar, $25 (9780374610166); e-book (9780374610173).

Poet, journalist, and children's-book author Zarin returns to a character she introduced in her cloud-like first novel, *Inverno* (2024). Estate is the Italian word for summer, and summer is the season, setting, and feeling of this manic, uncontainable continuation of Caroline's story, framed as a letter to Lorenzo, with whom she is having, and perhaps ending, an affair, "at first to tell him what my days were like when he was not with me, which was most of the time, but really, to keep track of them and to convince myself that I had a life without him." Caroline's exercise and exorcism gathers memories from her childhood, marriages, and other loves; stories she and Lorenzo told one another, reminiscences of her children at many stages, and the 1961 disappearance of Michael Rockefeller, complete with notes from the journals and correspondence he kept. *Estate* unfolds feverishly, amorphously, and outside of any straightforward or linear narrative. Reading it is more like embodying the mind of another; not at all simple, and fascinating in both language and content. —*Annie Bostrom*

★ Evensong.

By Stewart O'Nan.

Nov. 2025. 304p. Atlantic Monthly, $28 (9780802166432); e-book (9780802166449).



The women of Pittsburgh's Humpty Dumpty Club take care of each other and help struggling community members. Joan has long been in charge; when she takes a bad fall, her friends and fellow members look after her and take on her responsibilities. Kitzi works to earn the trust of Jean and Gene, a reclusive couple at risk of losing their home. Recent divorcée Susie takes in Joan's cat. Emily (a recurring character) negotiates her fraught relationship with her daughter, a recovering addict, while her sister-in-law, Arlene, faces dementia. The characters take turns narrating and some chapters are told from the perspectives of the whole group while they're gathered at lunch or bridge. The novel follows the trajectories of the women's lives as they move towards the local assisted living facility: "Longwood, the next to last stop. With each passing year it loomed greater in their imaginations, like Death, or Heaven." Likewise, the women's longtime participation in their Anglican church's evensong serves as a touchstone as they approach the twilight of their lives. Fans of Kent Haruf's *Our Souls at Night* (2015) and Elizabeth Strout's *Olive, Again* (2019) will appreciate the dignity O'Nan (*Ocean State*, 2022) affords his characters as they navigate both the dramatic and the mundane moments in their lives. *—Lindsay Harmon*

Flat Earth.

By Anika Jade Levy.

Nov. 2025. 224p. Catapult, paper, $26 (9781646222810).

Uncanny and blunt, Levy's first novel delivers a bleak, commodified reality—one that feels distant but recognizable—where everything has a price and little value. *Flat Earth* follows student Avery as she navigates adulthood, including its financial and social pressures, while maintaining a friendship with Frances, who was born into wealth. The novel uncovers the darkest aspects of American consumerism and throws its inequalities of class and gender in our faces. A coming-of-age story gone rogue, *Flat Earth* is notable for its portrayal of how transactions penetrate interpersonal relationships and create economies of art, youth, desire, and femininity. Despite its unsettling portrayals of depravity, Levy's prose is rich in style and sharp with punch lines. Sentences like "[t]he economy had gotten worse; the waitress had gotten prettier" illustrate the powerful effect of Avery's emotionless, matter-of-fact narration that shows how, in a world of overconsumption, not much is actually being digested. Both a mirror and crystal ball, *Flat Earth* is for readers not afraid of looking deeply into society's ills and perhaps finding parts of themselves there. *—Lillian Liao*

The Four Spent the Day Together.

By Chris Kraus.

Oct. 2025. 320p. Scribner, $29 (9781668098684); e-book (9781668098707).

In three parts, critic and multihyphenate author Kraus' (*I Love Dick*; *After Kathy Acker*) fifth novel examines American poverty, addiction, and everyday cruelty across one woman's life. At first Catt, her parents' bright and easygoing eldest child, scares them as a young teen, a truant rebel against their suburban Connecticut conformity. Part two opens decades later as Catt, a globe-trotting writer based in Los Angeles, falls in love with a cottage in remote northern Minnesota. With patience, the cottage becomes her and her second husband Paul's summer retreat for writing and enjoying nature. Recovering from addiction, Paul works as a rehab counselor and his struggle to stay sober and the soul-crushing nature of his work trying to help others become a mind-numbing cycle. Catt learns of the senseless murder of a man by two teenagers in Minnesota's Iron Range, and her true crime–like narrative of the event becomes the book's titular part three. Kraus' writing is deliberate and hard-hitting as she lets readers draw their own conclusions about the ever-relative nature of redemption and corrupting power of capitalism. *—Annie Bostrom*

Helm.

By Sarah Hall.

Nov. 2025. 368p. Mariner, $30 (9780063439948); e-book (9780063439924).

Hall (*Burntcoat*, 2021) pens a panoramic narrative imbued with magic, lore, meteorology, and human history to profile Helm, a named local wind inhabiting the Eden Valley in Cumbria, England. Helm is a meteorologic phenomenon named for and recognized by the glowering cloud bank that heralds its presence atop the Pennines. The wind is famously bad-tempered—ferocious, destructive, impersonal, and narcissistic—and only interested in humans because they are interested in Helm. Hall chronicles Helm's observations of humans through the ages. Neolithic herder NaNay and her people fear Helm and placate it by laying stones. Michael Lang, a man determined to plant a cross on Helm's home turf of Fiend's Fell, doggedly pursues Helm as the subject of an exorcism. Henry and Claudine ascend in a balloon to Helm, who is "not quite sure how Helm feels about it," but observes nonetheless, boggling at the "great, gaseous, patch-skinned thing" and history's first meeting of the mile-high club. A Victorian waif befriends untamed Helm, less dangerous than her caregivers. Royal Meteorological Society member Thomas Bodger stalks Helm with his Revelation Machine to reveal the wind's secrets, RAF planes chase Helm to their detriment, and on and on. Literary chapters rich with evocative vocabulary and dialect enchant with the chronicles of Helm. *—Kelly Fojtik*

In a Distant Valley.

By Shannon Bowring.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Europa, paper, $19 (9798889661405).

Bowring concludes her heartwarming trilogy chronicling small-town life in northern Maine on a strong note, following *The Road to Dalton* (2023) and *Where the River Meets the Forest* (2024). Five years ago, Bridget's death by suicide left Nate to raise their infant daughter. Now, Nate and Rose, a single mother, have found joy and solace in their deepening friendship. But Bridget's memory haunts Nate. And Rose fears her abusive ex-husband, Tommy, "a ghost of a different nature." Meanwhile, Greg, home from college for the holidays and coming to terms with his bisexuality, is drawn to Angela, a troubled young woman he knew in high school. A "ripsnorter" New Year's Eve blizzard brings things to a turning point. Bowring's compassionate, unflinchingly detailed portrayals of her characters' inner lives provide depth and nuance. For example, Tommy's thoughts, a volatile confusion of yearning and rage, frame his violent behavior. He loves his sons but struggles to control his anger, an inheritance he fears from his own father. A vibrant, hope-filled story of the redemptive possibilities of second chances. *—Anne Foley*

YA: *YAs will appreciate Bowring's sympathetic handling of issues of belonging, sexuality, addiction, and the weight of intergenerational trauma and family expectations. AF.*

Ladies in Waiting: Jane Austen's Unsung Characters.

By Elinor Lipman and others.

Nov. 2025. 384p. Gallery, paper, $19 (9781668204177); e-book (9781668204184).

Nine authors offer intriguing stories spotlighting women in supporting roles in Jane Austen's novels. The imaginative contributors are Adriana Trigiani, Sarah MacLean, Eloisa James, Elinor Lipman, Audrey Bellezza, Karen Dukess, Emily Harding, Nikki Payne, and Diana Quincy, and they represent a satisfying variety of genres. Each writer has created vivid settings and thoughtful inner lives to infuse these secondary characters with the main-character energy they deserve. The stories vary in length and in time periods, which presents interesting challenges and contrasts between stories that take place in Austen's era versus those rolled forward to modern times and in different places. An excerpt from the Austen novel that inspired the story and the author's reasoning behind her work accompany each tale and will be appreciated by readers for the additional context they provide. A fun read for fans of the nine writers as well as Austen admirers, this smart and lively anthology is a fresh and vibrant homage to Austen and her ever-compelling fiction in celebration of her 250th birthday. *—Stacey Hayman*

Last Call at the Savoy.

By Brisa Carleton.

Nov. 2025. 320p. Grand Central, $29 (9781538772881); e-book (9781538772904).

Cinnamon Scott is adrift in life, but when her beloved sister calls her to England to be by her side during the final month of her high-risk pregnancy, Cinnamon gives up her socialite partying ways to stay with her at the elegant Savoy Hotel. To soothe her worries—Cinnamon can't bear to lose her sister only a few years after they'd lost both of their parents—she begins visiting the hotel bar around midnight, first for the alcohol and then to hear stories about the once-famous, now-forgotten female bartender who ran the place, and made it the place to be, a century earlier. Cinnamon meets and starts flirting with a famous, handsome history author, and with that, coupled with thinking about the forgotten bartender, she begins to feel a spark of inspiration for the writing she used to do. This is a sweet story of a young woman growing into her own and realizing that life goes

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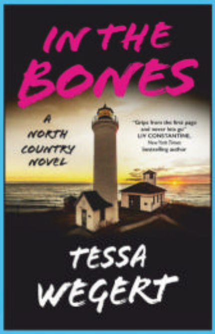
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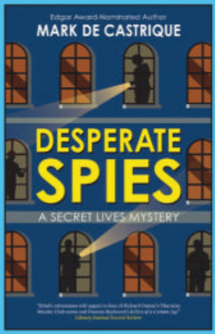
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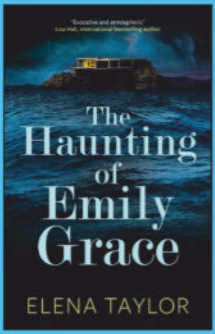
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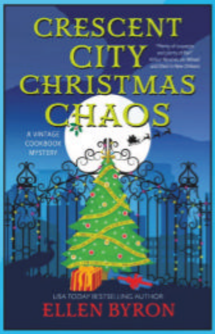
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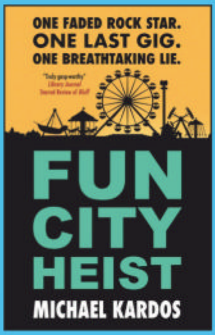
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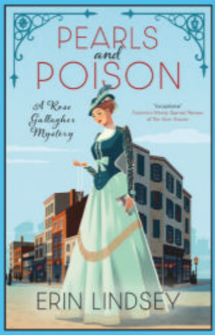
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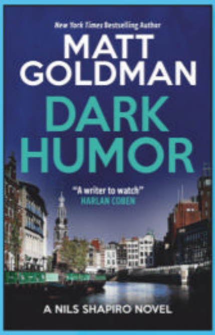
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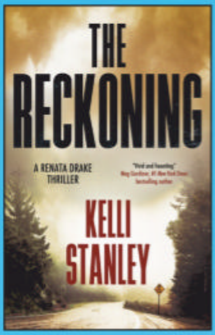
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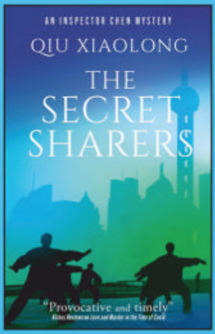
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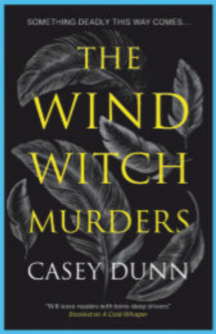
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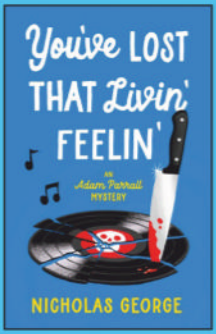
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on, even after the unthinkable happens, and can still be beautiful even if it's not what we'd imagined. —*Pamela Gardner*

Lightbreakers.

By Aja Gabel.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Riverhead, $30 (9780593329702); e-book (9780593329726).

Some wounds do not heal easily. When quantum physicist Noah Byatt meets his future wife, artist Maya Tanaka, he is still grieving the unimaginable loss of his three-year-old daughter, Serena. The tragedy wrecked his first marriage to Eileen, a university professor. A job offer from an enigmatic tycoon gives Noah a chance to start anew deep in the Texas desert. Noah is to be a test subject for the Janus Project, which uses mapping techniques based on recent memories to enable people to remember the past so vividly that they practically get transported there. Naturally Noah's first impulse is to visit Serena, hoping that he might reverse the events of the fateful night she died. Soon Maya and Eileen also participate in this ill-fated experiment, events that will prove to be both draining and cathartic. A couple of overwrought metaphors notwithstanding, Gabel (*The Ensemble*, 2018) paints a phenomenal portrait of profound grief. "Being a parent made real the abstract idea that life could be both sturdy and delicate, willful and mutable, here and then gone," Gabel writes. Amid the heart-wrenching moments is also liberating closure. Hope blooms much like Maya's anemic cactus that gets new life with a graft. —*Poornima Apte*

Like Family.

By Erin O. White.

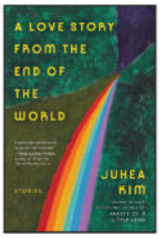
Nov. 2025. 320p. Dial, $29 (9780593978559); e-book (9780593978573).

Memoirist White makes her fiction debut in this complex and heartfelt novel. The small town of Radclyffe in upstate New York is populated by a tightly braided group of characters. Ruth and her wife, Wyn, have four children; Ruth's best friend, Caroline, has a son with her husband Mike; and Mike's cousin Tobi and her wife, Evie, have a set of twins. As the book opens, Ruth and Wyn are finally being introduced to Tobi and Evie, who own a well-known pottery studio in town. Soon, all the kids are playing together, and the adults' relationships transform and deepen. Ruth must contend with a tragedy that directly affects her and her oldest daughter, while Caroline and Evie process their simmering jealousy over their spouses' closeness. After meeting a nonbinary musician, Tobi questions her own gender identity. As part of queer families, the children also seek to understand their own origins. All of these changes bend and shape the story, and while there are many hardships, this close-knit family ultimately brings the reader a sense of joy. —*Cari Dubiel*

A Love Story from the End of the World.

By Juhea Kim.

Nov. 2025. 208p. Ecco, paper, $17 (978-0063446397); e-book (9780063446403).



After two notable novels, Kim presents an exquisite collection of 10 stories. In a not-too-distant future, humans have managed to grievously injure, scar, and contaminate planet Earth. Kim's memorable characters somehow survive, loving and breaking, abandoning and reclaiming each other. Disconnects particularly haunt, as in "Biodome," in which two awkward strangers consider an arranged marriage under New Seoul's translucent enclosure offering protection from the toxic atmosphere. "Mountain, Island" features the devolving friendship between two boys eking out an existence atop a rotting landfill. "Bioark" follows the complicated relationships between the passengers on the self-sustaining (for now) eponymous ship bypassing the wasteland. The extraordinary "Older Sister" covers the evolving decades of two estranged Korean American sisters and their conflagratory reunion. Human-animal bonds are highlighted in the heart-wringing "KwaZulu-Natal," about a boy and the elephant he can't save, while the somewhat hopeful title story features a Korean-adoptee scientist who nurtures a struggling polar bear cub on one of world's last ice caps and experiences personal peace. Kim concludes by gravely sharing her environmental concerns, "If you're an artist, it is not conscionable to use our ecological catastrophe as material for fiction and not personally do something to help." Kim reveals exactly how she lives her truth and states, "We have within ourselves everything we need to save humanity." —*Terry Hong*

Lucky Girl.

By Allie Tagle-Dokus.

Nov. 2025. 368p. Tin House, paper, $17.99 (9781963108620); e-book, $9.99 (9781963108637).

From reality TV to world tours, *Lucky Girl* is a ball of fun—one that begins to unravel just as quickly as it came together. Tagle-Dokus' debut novel follows the young, determined, and talented Lucy, whose passion for dance takes her across the dazzling yet often dangerous world of show business. Lucy's rise to stardom is guided by Bruise, a famous singer who takes an interest in developing the young dancer's career. Their relationship becomes increasingly toxic, setting the stage for the novel's exploration of unbridled ambition and refreshing self-discovery, including of one's sexual orientation. A thought-provoking take on the coming-of-age genre, *Lucky Girl* is not about lost innocence but about how we learn to see ourselves and the consequences of our decisions reflected in the world. Told from Lucy's perspective, the text is also concerned with racial inequity and representation in show business—encouraging readers to question what is visible on and off screens. Reading *Lucky Girl* brings out one of humankind's deepest desires: the wish to be seen by others, but most of all, by ourselves. —*Lillian Liao*

YA: *YAs may be easily drawn in by Lucy's authentic teen perspective and exploration of heavy topics. LL.*

The Man Next Door.

By Sheila Roberts.

Oct. 2025. 368p. MIRA, paper, $18.99 (9780778360285); e-book (9780369773784).

After breaking her leg while on a cruise to Hawaii, Louise Hartman finds herself back home looking for ways to fill the day. Louise's daughter, Zona, who is staying with her after a financially disastrous divorce, and Zona's daughter, Brie, suggest that Louise should finally write that mystery she's talked about for so long. With some help from her new home caregiver, Gilda Radovich, Louise casts about for inspiration. Alec James, their handsome new neighbor, is a bit of a Jekyll-and-Hyde. One minute he comes across as incredibly charming and the next he is heard vociferously, maybe even violently, berating the young lady living with him. Could the mystery Louise seeks be unfolding right next door? Roberts (*The Best Life Book Club*, 2024) cleverly pays homage to Hitchcock's *Rear Window* while making the most of her flair for creating an engaging cast of multigenerational characters and then setting them loose in a heartwarming story that thoughtfully explores the bonds of family and friendship. —*John Charles*

The Memory Gardener.

By Meg Donohue.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Gallery, paper, $19 (9781668205396); e-book (9781668205402).

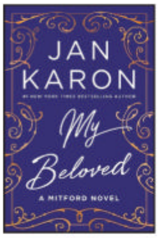
Lucy Barnes is no ordinary gardener. Under her hands, flowers bloom more vibrantly and grow faster, and their scents supernaturally convey which people could benefit from their properties. After 10 restless years flitting from one short-term gardening job to the next, avoiding her hometown of Bantom Bay, California, Lucy has returned, concerned about her dad after her mother's death six months earlier. A note in her mother's calendar takes Lucy to the Oceanview Home for seniors, where the owner needs a gardener to restore the neglected grounds. Despite warnings to avoid the residents as well as her mother's caution about using her gift, Lucy is drawn to the people there, her preternatural ability sparking memories and shifting the home's gloomy atmosphere into a revitalized community, healing old wounds as the residents find fresh purpose in uniting to save the home from closure. Donohue's (*You, Me, and the Sea*, 2019) latest tale enchants, filled with quirky characters, notes of romance, and mystical fragrances. Readers who appreciated *Chocolat* or never outgrew *The Secret Garden* will inhale this. —*Karen Clements*

My Beloved: A Mitford Novel.

By Jan Karon.

Oct. 2025. 432p. Putnam, $32 (9798217047178).

Father Tim's wife, Cynthia, wants just one thing for Christmas: a letter. So he pours his heart out through his pen, declaring his love and baring his soul, sticking the letter in a book of Billy Collins poems. Only, the book, and the letter, go missing. It ends up in the hands of nonogenarian former mayor Esther Cunningham, who is sure her husband didn't write it and who sets it out with the recycling. Then, through acts of thrift and generosity, piano teacher (and spinster) Helene Pringle finds it, reads it, and has to take to her bed. Surely Harley Welch, a simple mountain man if there ever was one, didn't write it to her. As the holidays approach, Tim and Cynthia's adopted son, Dooley, and his wife, Lace, deal with familial and financial pressures, not the least of which is where Harley and his partner-in-crime Willie will live when they "retire." It's been a while since Karon's last novel set in western North Carolina, *To Be Where You Are* (2017), so her many readers will be eager for further dispatches from Mitford. They will not be disappointed with this tender, spiritual tale of family and the boundless love that exists in community. —*Susan Maguire*



Near Flesh.

By Katherine Dunn.

Oct. 2025. 272p. Farrar/MCD, $28 (9780374602352).

A posthumous collection explores the strange, ethereal worlds of author Dunn, who wrote the 1989 cult classic *Geek Love*. These 18 previously unpublished works revolve around bodies and the way we use them. In the titular story, a high-powered businesswoman realizes that her sex robots cannot fulfill her deepest desire: to be known. When she hears about a companionship console, she immediately orders the new model called the Brain. She eventually falls in love with the console and reckons with the physical limitations of their relationship. In *Near Flesh*, robots, aliens, and other foreign bodies frequently loom over humans who are struggling with their own livelihoods. Dunn gives a master class in short-form prose. For example, in a succinct two pages, she manages to capture the chaos and grief of losing a child during an explosion. Dunn, who died in 2016, was known to embrace the grotesque and twisted in her fiction. This collection—her second book to be published posthumously (after *Toad*, 2022)—is no different. Perfect for readers who enjoy dark short stories with a dash of sf. —*Allison Cho*

On the Calculation of Volume (Book III).

By Solvej Balle. Tr. by Sophia Hersi Smith and Jennifer Russell.

Nov. 2025. 144p. New Directions, paper, $15.95 (9780811238397); e-book (9780811238403).

In the third book of Danish author Balle's sparkling, seven-part speculative novel, former bookseller Tara Selter is still stuck in a repeating version of November 18, in which she's a little older every time she wakes up, but the world isn't. After spending the first two books getting used to her situation, she now finds, on Day 1144, something new: another human who recognizes that "time has ground to a halt." Norwegian sociologist Henry Dale is delighted to meet "a playmate" and soon moves in with her, despite Tara's misgivings. As the volume bounces through their thoughts on Roman history, philosophy, and the possible impact their situation is having on the environment, their relationship starts to fray, with Tara going to spy on her husband in France and Henry visiting his young son in the U.S., before the ending introduces a cliff-hanging new set of complications. Original and remarkably light in spirit, Balle's quirkily inventive opus casts new light on the sheer weirdness of the human condition. —*Margaret Quamme*

Other People's Fun.

By Harriet Lane.

Nov. 2025. 208p. Little, Brown, $29 (9780316369947); e-book (9781474602853).

Ruth Saving returns to her old boarding school for a memorial service expecting a day of polite reminiscence. Instead, she finds herself pulled back into the intensity of old friendships, rivalries, and long-buried crushes. She reconnects with former classmates like Sookie, the glamorous peer who didn't pay much attention to her during their school days, and Mr. Waxham, the charismatic choirmaster who still lingers in her imagination. Ruth finds herself both drawn to and repelled by these encounters, reflecting on her lifelong role as an outsider—someone who observes, admires, and lurks at the edges of other people's lives. Lane (*Her*, 2015) examines the gulf between how people present themselves and how others remember them. Through Ruth's sharp, often uneasy gaze, Lane explores themes of belonging, self-erasure, and the desperate desire to be seen. The result is sharp, unsettling, and quietly devastating, reminding us how much of our sense of self may be bound up in other people's fun. A quiet, psychologically astute story that will appeal to readers who enjoy tension built from the smallest moments. —*Emily Park*

P. S. You're the Worst.

By Chloe Seager.

Nov. 2025. 320p. Morrow, paper, $18.99 (9780063307209).

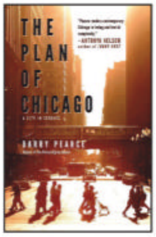
Life is not going well for Becky. While all of her friends seem to be flourishing, her career is stagnating; she lives with her mother; and she is still hung up on her ex-boyfriend. After learning he has moved in with his new girlfriend, Becky seeks life advice via a tarot reading only to learn she is about to die . . . or so she thinks. Using this knowledge, Becky writes letters to friends, family, and her boss, telling them exactly what she thinks of them, with the intention of jetting off to Bali to live out her remaining days. Only things don't go quite as planned, and Becky is forced to face the consequences of her missives. Becky's insecurities and uncertainties will be relatable to many, and Seager (*Open Minded*, 2024) writes an entertaining and lighthearted story that also shows real character growth. Readers who enjoy sympathetic depictions of messy women figuring out adulthood, such as those by Dolly Alderton or Monica Heisey, will find a lot to enjoy. —*Halle Carlson*

The Plan of Chicago: A City in Stories.

By Barry Pearce.

Nov. 2025. 258p. Cornerstone, paper, $25.95 (9781968148119).

Little goes according to plan in Pearce's subtly linked short stories, each pegged to a specific Chicago neighborhood. Pearce knows the city well in all its aspirations, ironies, devastations, and transcendence, capturing Chicago's ever-shifting mix of diverse people in various economic situations, of residents with deep family roots and recent immigrants. He precisely renders the particular physicality of this big, gridded city on a Great Lake and how it infiltrates the psyches of his characters as they struggle through confounding moral dilemmas and personal reckonings. The women and men in these nuanced and surprising tales grapple with poverty, paradox, addiction, racism, love, and lies. In "Enumerator," a lonely Polish immigrant in a precarious marriage to an American finds her way by working for the Census. Well-intentioned contractor Sully is caught in the grind of neighborhood prejudice. A hard-working waiter and family man in a gentrifying Latino neighborhood is betrayed by a wealthy new neighbor. A taxi driver from Somalia who does the right thing is attacked as a criminal. A couple living in a dilapidated building besieged by storms and the roiled lake tries to navigate the trauma of rape. Writing in the lyrical, revelatory mode of Stuart Dybek, Pearce illuminates the soul of Chicago and the perplexities of human nature with exquisite sensitivity, authenticity, and artistry. —*Donna Seaman*



Sacrament.

By Susan Straight.

Oct. 2025. 352p. Counterpoint, $28 (9781640097131); e-book (9781640097148).

Straight follows the plight of a group of nurses in San Bernadino, California, during the summer of 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, weaving in the lead of her previous novel, *Mecca* (2023), California Highway Patrol officer Johnny Frías. Cousins Larette and Cherisse are ICU nurses who are living in trailers near the hospital to protect their loved ones from the virus while watching their patients struggle and often perish. Both are mothers separated from their children. Larette's son, Dante, is with his father, Grief, an animal-control officer who is battling the effects of Long COVID-19 and missing Larette. Cherisse's teenage daughter, Raquel, is furious that her mother has left her with an elderly relative and keeps missing school meetings. When Cherisse gets COVID-19, Raquel runs away with a teenage boy to go visit her mother and goes missing, prompting Larette to enlist Grief and Johnny to find her. A powerful, at times painful, and edifying look at the sacrifices hospital workers made on the front lines of the pandemic. —*Kristine Huntley*

> **YA:** *Teen readers will be grabbed by 15-year-old Raquel's risky odyssey to be reunited with her mother. KH.*

Scavengers.

By Kathleen Boland.

Jan. 2026. 304p. Viking, $29 (9780593834480).

In Boland's jaunty debut, an estranged mother and daughter head off for a weekend in the Utah desert in search of buried treasure—and possibly some forgiveness. After Bea, a normally cautious commodities analyst, takes a risk that costs her her job, she heads to Salt Lake City and the home of her flighty mother, Christy (rent paid for by Bea). Christy, who "had always been able to get by without any sort of recognizable job or career," is currently obsessed with an internet forum dedicated to analyzing a poem that allegedly reveals the location of a treasure. Christy heads to the desert town of Mercy with a carefully assembled map of clues—and plans to rendezvous with mysterious forum member Bob—and Bea reluctantly joins. The eventful weekend includes a near-fatal trip off-trail, a flash flood, hot-spring adventures, a robbery, some salty pancakes, and a couple of possible new romances. Boland clearly has a deep knowledge of this otherworldly, often dangerous landscape, and she's come up with a fresh and unexpectedly sweet take on the theme of strained but salvageable mother-daughter bonds. —*Margaret Quamme*

The Secret Christmas Library.

By Jenny Colgan.

Oct. 2025. 320p. Morrow, paper, $18.99 (9780063437371).

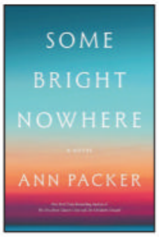
Colgan (*Close Knit*, 2024) delivers the cozy in her latest Christmas novel. Mirren, the antiquarian book hunter introduced in the Amazon Original *The Christmas Book Hunt* (2024), is hired by the young and attractive Jamie McKinnon to search for a valuable book in his crumbling Scottish castle. Jamie believes that the book is so rare that its value could help save the estate. On her way to meet him, Mirren runs into posh Theo Palliser, who is also an antique book hunter, and is after the same book. Mirren and Theo arrive at the castle, but not long after, a terrible snowstorm traps her, Jamie, Theo, Jamie's sister Esme, and the housekeeper Bonnie in the castle with no power. Jamie's hoarder grandfather was the last owner of the book (and the castle) and his love of puzzles leads the crew on a treasure hunt to find the book and survive the collapsing castle. Cozy mystery readers and those who want gentle crime (without the murder) and a hint of romance will enjoy Colgan's latest. —*Crystal Vela*

Some Bright Nowhere.

By Ann Packer.

Nov. 2025. 256p. Harper, $28.99 (9780063421493); e-book (9780063421516).

Eliot and Claire have been married for decades, with cancer determining the course of their lives for the last eight years. Eliot, who narrates, is a devoted caregiver. Now that Claire is nearing the end of her long struggle, he's prepared to stay at her side in their New Haven home with the help of hospice aides, friends, and their two adult children. But Claire has another idea about how she wants to spend her final days, a request that leaves Eliot stunned, perplexed, hurt, and, as much as he tries to hide it, angry. A decade after *A Children's Crusade* (2015), Packer delivers a novel of exquisite psychological exactitude and a breathtakingly insightful portrait of a besieged marriage. Eliot is mesmerizing as he navigates the shifting parameters of his role in his dying wife's life amidst a torrent of memories, regrets, redoubled commitment, frustration, and despair. Every shift in Claire's condition and feelings, every painful, sometimes ludicrous test of his love and empathy, every doubt cast on his understanding of himself and how others see him, and every nuance of his "profound shock and grief" are conveyed with extraordinary sensitivity, candor, tenderness, and wit. Packer's gorgeous, deeply involving novel is a suspenseful and radiant reckoning with love, sorrow, and the everlasting mystery of death. —*Donna Seaman*



Son of the Morning.

By Akwaeke Emezi.

Nov. 2025. 320p. Avon, $32 (9780063323186); e-book (9780063323209).

Emezi's tenth book masterfully combines the magical realism of their previous work, *Somadina* (2025), and the passionate depth of their earlier *You Made a Fool of Death with Your Beauty* (2022). Emezi's only predictability is their unpredictability. Galilee Kincaid was raised by a formidable clan of women. Although all of the Kincaids have been "touched," Galilee knows and has always known that she is different. Enter Lucifer Helel. From their first searing touch, Lucifer and Galilee are bound to each other. And theirs is the kind of love that questions loyalties, unearths secrets, and brings the king of Hell to his knees. There is no greater antihero than the devil, and Emezi flips traditional narratives of heaven and hell to question a damning God and a damned angel. Yet they return to the timeless tale of divine self-sacrifice for humanity. The faces may change, but the core story remains the same. This is a novel of intricate motives and deep relational dynamics. Be warned, though, the intimate scenes are explicit in the extreme. —*Enobong Tommelleo*

A Stranger Comes to Town.

By Lynne Sharon Schwartz.

Oct. 2025. 208p. EastOver, paper, $19.99 (9781958094631).

A man with amnesia must piece together his life and confront unpleasant realities in Schwartz's nimble, intriguing novel. Joe, a 37-year-old actor, is out for a run in Central Park when he collides with a bicyclist, the accident wiping his memory. With the hope that his amnesia will eventually subside, Joe returns to his family's brownstone to recover under the careful eye of wife, Norah. As Joe acclimates to his three children and the demands of his popular TV role, little by little Norah begins to fill him in on the details of his past. Many are troubling, such as the grisly death of his father as well as an event in high school that forever changed the once close bond with his twin sister. Also concerning are the disturbing origins of his youngest child's adoption. While Joe sorts through the fragments of truths in his life and relationships, his path towards self-reconciliation shifts. Can he truly renounce the man he was before? Schwartz crafts an exquisite look into the fragility of memory and perception of the authentic self. —*Leah Strauss*

Terry Dactyl.

By Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore.

Nov. 2025. 272p. Coffee House, paper, $18 (9781566897419); e-book (9781566897426).

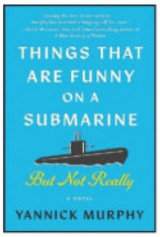
In her dynamic new novel, Lambda Literary Award–winning author Sycamore (*Touching the Art*, 2023) explores joy, grief, and the transcendence of the dance floor. Terry Dactyl was raised in "a world of the universal she," living in a queer Seattle household during the ravages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Full of glitter and grit, Terry makes her way to New York City and becomes a club kid, discovering release in drugs, dancing, and creating showstopping looks. She finds a new community, including gallery owner Sabine and Sid, a queen who takes Terry in and holds their found family together. But death confronts Terry again, first by taking her loved ones and then through the COVID-19 pandemic. She flees N.Y.C. for Seattle, desperate for relief and connection, only to be faced by isolation, gentrification, and mass protests. Sycamore's prose is fluid and funny, tender and propulsive, as she brings us along on Terry's journey of love, loss, and finding herself. —*Rebecca Hopman*

Things That Are Funny on a Submarine but Not Really.

By Yannick Murphy.

Nov. 2025. 384p. Arcade, $29.99 (9781648211355); e-book (9781648211362).

Murphy, a fiction writer of vibrant imagination, wit, and nuance, returns after a long hiatus with a bravura first-person performance in the voice of a kind and curious submarine radioman. Based on Guam, far from his New England family, David—large, tall, funny, and nicknamed Dead Man—is a reader and a storyteller. His parents want him to go to college,



but he's devoted to the bizarreness of life inside "a big steel tube of dumb." The pages fizz with the crew's profane and colorful slang as he vigorously conveys the mix of tedium, stress, camaraderie, absurdity, and drama that pulses in that compressed world as they work their shifts, have hilarious debates, and confide in each other. David's buddies, Grenadier, who is worried about his marriage, and Tintin, who is in love with a stripper, end up in conflict as concerns about a spy on board intensify, and Doc, more harsh than healing, puts David in a tough spot. David finally sets his sights on college with the intention of becoming a writer. This fish-out-of-water shift casts light on the struggles of veterans as David tries to adjust to another strange contained world and embrace his new calling while being haunted by his shipmates. Murphy has created a soulful and charismatic protagonist in an uncanny, transfixing, and revelatory bildungsroman. —*Donna Seaman*

Timber & Lụa.

By Vi Khi Nào and Lily Hoàng.

Nov. 2025. 280p. Red Hen, paper, $19.95 (9781636284316); e-book (9781636284323).

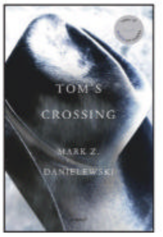
Award-winning interdisciplinary writers Hoàng and Nào provocatively interrogate language, comprehension, and communication in a global world. Their collaborative result is a polyglot showcase that combines English, Vietnamese, and a hybrid Vietlish to present 10 "experimental narratives"—a non-love story, disorienting conversations, dystopic genocide—that prove intriguingly experiential. Each is presented in three formats, intertwined English and Vietnamese (Vietlish) with a glossary, which is then repeated (almost) only in English on the left page and (almost) only in Vietnamese on the right. That "almost" reminds readers that linguistic purity does not exist, particularly within diasporic populations. Aligning this collection's publication with the fiftieth anniversary of the 1975 Fall of Sài Gòn recognizes and underscores a pivotal moment in the significant expansion of the Vietnamese American community—and their inevitable adaptation and alteration of language. Hoàng and Nào manage to capture that literal discomfort, to replicate the challenges to understanding by cleaving each narrative into three. Overlaying the three versions together should ultimately reveal each story in full—but mindful participation and commitment will be required. —*Terry Hong*

Tom's Crossing.

By Mark Z. Danielewski.

Oct. 2025. 1,232p. Pantheon, $40 (9781524747718); e-book (9781524747725).

Danielewski is best known for his inventive, typographically experimental cult classic novel, *House of Leaves* (2000). He's a writer unafraid to place high demands on his readers. Reading his latest is like taking a long, long walk with a virtuosic raconteur, one requiring the occasional scaling of an intimidating peak but also providing views of breathtaking grandeur. Kalin March is the quintessential outsider, a quiet, perpetually awkward new kid in town with woefully unfashionable attire. When Kalin is befriended by Tom Gatestone, a well-liked and respected classmate, his fortunes seem to turn. The boys bond over horses, specifically two that are slated for slaughter by Old Porch, the evil patriarch of a much-feared family in their small Utah town. The boys concoct a plan to save the horses by taking them into the mountains, but Tom dies. In this sweeping epic set in the rugged Utah wilderness, Kalin attempts to rescue the horses on his own until he is joined by Tom's ghost. Danielewski's prose is lush and dialect-inflected, simultaneously ornate and folksy, reminiscent of early Cormac McCarthy. The characters are exquisitely drawn, memorable, and fully human. Mythic in ambition, the narrative is propulsive yet immersive, given to rumination and asides, adding intimacy and emotional resonance. A most resplendent journey well worth the effort. —*Bill Kelly*



Town and Country.

By Brian Schaefer.

Nov. 2025. 304p. Atria, $28 (9781668086896); e-book (9781668086919).

Running for a national congressional seat in Griffin, a small town in rural New York, two candidates represent polarized extremes. Amiable lifelong Griffin resident Chip Riley owns the Lucky Bar, a dingy but beloved local dive. Chip's son Joe is mired in the opioid epidemic devastating their community, while his other son, Will, is grudgingly home from college after abruptly coming out to his parents the previous fall. Chip's wife, Diane, holds the family together financially by selling real estate, primarily to the town's other faction: wealthy gay couples buying bankrupt farms and remodeling them into lavish vacation homes. These Griffin residents support charming idealist Paul, whose husband (and bankroller) is Stan, a seasoned and cynical activist. First-novelist Schaefer also brings in a large, quirky, and memorable supporting cast of representatives from both factions. The narrative follows these engaging, empathetic, and often heartbreakingly authentic human beings from Memorial Day to the November election, bringing readers along on an emotional roller coaster as they navigate increasingly complex relationships. An auspicious debut for Schaefer. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Weekend Crashers.

By Jamie Brenner.

Nov. 2025. 320p. Park Row, paper, $18.99 (9780778310853); e-book (9780369747648).

As a single mom, Maggie has always put her daughter Piper's needs before her own. Now that Piper is in her twenties and starting a modeling career, Maggie sees her less frequently, but still wants her daughter to have everything Maggie never did. After Piper falls on the catwalk at a very important fashion show, Maggie suggests that they attend a weekend knitting retreat at a picturesque inn in New Hope, Pennsylvania. When they show up, they learn that the inn has been double booked, with the other guests being a raucous group celebrating a bachelor party. Determined to make the most of the weekend, Maggie and Piper befriend the other women at the knitting retreat and even propose a friendly bet with the men of the bachelor party. As the weekend unfolds, Maggie and Piper come to realizations that redefine their relationship and help each of them determine what they want from their futures. This sweet, touching story will appeal to readers who enjoy heartfelt novels that center on women's relationships such as those by Kristy Woodson Harvey or Nancy Thayer. —*Halle Carlson*

When the Fireflies Dance.

By Aisha Hassan.

Dec. 2025. 368p. Scout, $29 (9781668043288); e-book (9781668043301).

In her haunting debut novel set in Pakistan, Hassan delivers a vivid portrait of a young man's fight for survival in the shadows of poverty and oppression. Lalloo's family sends him away in the hope that he might find a better life, yet the chains of debt and forced labor bind them all. His older brother, once a dreamer and a source of inspiration, is brutally killed as a warning to others, leaving Lalloo determined to free those he loves from the grip of the owners of the brickmaking bhatti where his family labors. He must navigate a world where trust is dangerous, hope is scarce, and betrayal, injustice, and despair shadow him at every turn. One question drives him forward: will he save his family, or will the weight of surviving crush what remains of his spirit? With richly descriptive, unflinchingly honest prose, Hassan draws readers into the heat and dust and the quiet resilience of her characters' lives. A story of sacrifice, unbreakable sibling bonds, and the fragile hope that flickers even in the darkest nights. —*Sarah Myers*

The White Hot.

By Quiara Alegría Hudes.

Nov. 2025. 176p. One World, $26 (9780593732335); e-book (9780593732342).

In this first novel from memoirist and Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright Hudes (*My Broken Language*, 2021), quick-tempered April, tried one too many times by her bellicose ten-year-old, Noelle, flees the family home they share with April's mother and grandmother. Catching a bus, April quickly realizes how little she's experienced in her 26 years outside of her Philadelphia neighborhood, especially since she got pregnant with

Noelle in highschool. She lands first in the foreign wilderness of Ohiopyle, a state park where she's befriended by Kamal, a man on his own flight. Kamal introduces April to Mingus and Hendrix, and to leisurely hours, before April takes up his heartbreaking request, then takes his Benz and continues on her journey. Finally, ill-advisedly, she shows up at the cluttered and happy home of Noelle's father's family, and lets herself in, planning to ask, almost literally, for her life back. Hudes' talent as a dramatist is on display in the interaction and movement between her characters, yet heightened by the interiority a novel can offer. A rich and startling feat of imagination. —*Annie Bostrom*

Winter Stories.

By Ingvild Rishøi. Tr. by Diane Oatley.

Dec. 2025. 240p. Grove, $22 (9780802165947); e-book (9780802165954).

WINTER STORIES
INGVILD RISHØI
Author of BRIGHTLY SHINING

Can a lifetime of struggle be distilled into a single moment? Oslo-based Rishøi, author of the best-selling novel *Brightly Shining* (2024), shows it's possible in her riveting latest, three stories examining the multitudes contained within just a few short hours. With sympathetic characters, expert pacing, and palpable tension, Rishøi builds each tale toward a gripping conclusion. First, a young mother, almost out of cash, finds kindness from a stranger, her daughter's dreamy-eyed take on the world for once winning out over her own harsh reality. Then, a man recently released from prison prepares for a much-anticipated visit from his son and reflects on his relationship with the boy's mother, as a fuller picture emerges of what drove him to crime. Finally, a 17-year-old out of options tries taking her half-siblings to a refuge, under the looming threat of discovery or disaster. In a department-store fitting room, a pillow shop, or a snowed-in country road, *Winter Stories* explores how seemingly everyday interactions can carry extraordinary consequences. The past meets the present as promises, regrets, and betrayals intertwine; relationships that are over but not forgotten surface for characters tracing the choices that led to their current crucible moments—all while Rishøi finds light amid the darkness of a Norwegian winter. —*Bridget Thoreson*

Crime Fiction

After the Weeping.

By David Mark.

Dec. 2025. 240p. Severn, $29.99 (9781448315345); e-book (9781448315352).

DI Aector McAvoy, head of the Humberside Police Cold Case Unit, isn't surprised—at least initially—when his boss, DCS Trish Pharoah, asks him to reopen the brutal beating death of Davey Hawksmoor 10 years earlier. Davey was the son of Rab Hawksmoor, a local man known for his charity work with Romanian orphans. Rab ended up in thrall to gangsters who forced him to use his "aid missions" to traffic drugs, people, and goods. McAvoy isn't aware of this, but Trish is determined to bring down the entire network of malicious criminals. As readers of Mark's previous McAvoy books (like *Past Redemption*, 2024) will know, Trish is a tough cop who will do anything to achieve her aims, and Aector, his family, Trish's colleagues and informants, and even her bosses aren't immune to being drawn into her endgame, no matter how many bodies she racks up. This twisted, gory, brutal story may not be for the faint hearted, but fans who relish cop-noir thrillers, taut suspense, deeply flawed characters, and complex plots won't be able to put it down. —*Emily Melton*

All of Us Murderers.

By KJ Charles.

Oct. 2025. 352p. Poisoned Pen, paper, $17.99 (9781464227523).

Zebedee Wyckham is surprised to be summoned by his eldest cousin Wynn to the family's gothic estate, which was handed down to Wynn from their austere grandfather. Even more shocking, however, is when Zeb finds his ex-lover Gideon there, working as Wynn's secretary. The circumstances don't become any less mysterious when Wynn announces to the assembled family that the estate will go to whomever marries the family's heretofore unknown second cousin Jessamine. Furthermore, they are pressed for time because Wynn believes that all of the descendants of their grandfather are cursed to never live past fifty. The mysteries of the estate and the family begin to unravel as they are all trapped by oppressive mists that preclude motor travel, as well as some sinister machinations. Set in the early twentieth century and atmospherically lit by gas lamps, the slow-burn romance between Zeb and Gideon is treated tenderly during a time when queer love was illegal. This book will appeal to readers who appreciate a focus on setting, as the mist from the English moors creeps eerily over this story laced with romance, mystery, and intrigue. —*Pamela Gardner*

All Spooked Up.

By E. J. Copperman.

Nov. 2025. 256p. Severn, $29.99 (9781448315208); e-book (9781448315215).

Copperman launches a new series of quirky puzzlers featuring Laura Meehan, who moves back home to take over her beloved father's paint and wallpaper store after his death. Most of her customers are pleasant enough, but one guy, Ernie Colasco, insists that Laura let him buy on credit "like her dad did." Laura's not about to let that happen. Closing up one night, she thinks she sees an apparition in her office—and it looks just like her dad. She heads home, worrying that the stresses of the move and running the business are getting to her. When she opens the store the following day, she's shocked to see Ernie crushed to death in her paint-shaking machine. Concerned she'll be a suspect, she vows to find Ernie's killer, but of course, that's easier said than done. Luckily, her "apparition dad," who retired from the police before opening his paint store, is around to advise her on how to nab the killer. With head-spinning twists, droll humor, red herrings aplenty, and a plucky heroine, Copperman's latest is sure to please his legions of fans. —*Emily Melton*

At Midnight Comes the Cry.

By Julia Spencer-Fleming.

Nov. 2025. 320p. Minotaur, $29 (9780312606862); e-book (9781250022677).

The holiday season in the village of Miller's Kill promises joyful new traditions for combat veteran and Episcopal priest Claire Fergusson and her husband, newly retired police chief Russ van Alstyne, who have welcomed a son into their little family (since *Hid From Our Eyes*, 2020). Instead, a white supremacy group's unauthorized float at the village parade heralds new threats. Claire's bid to change hearts by connecting with the hate group members' wives makes her the target of an abusive felon when she helps his wife escape his control. Meanwhile, Miller's Kill cop Hadley Knox and Russ are searching for former colleague Kevin Flynn, who is MIA after his undercover mission infiltrating the same white supremacy group folded. Deep in the Adirondack Mountains, their search becomes a survival mission when Russ infiltrates the organization's illegal training camp. Each step moves them all closer to the heart of the group's imminent and violent operation, erupting in a masterfully crafted climax. Cleverly constructed around the advent and family, this tenth episode's thrills strike deep. Highly recommended for readers who enjoy Nevada Barr and Paul Doiron. —*Christine Tran*

The Bone Thief.

By Vanessa Lillie.

Oct. 2025. 368p. Berkley, $30 (9780593550144); e-book (9780593550151).

Archaeologist Syd Walker is back after her outing in *Blood Sisters* (2023). Syd, fresh from a deeply personal case in Oklahoma, returns to her job at the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Rhode Island. She's brought home her childhood friend, who's now living with her, and Syd's wife is pregnant with their first child. Syd's life becomes even more stressful when she finds the skeleton of a Native woman. The skeleton dates back to the 1600s, and Syd wants to make sure the bones return to the woman's people. But a local group called the Founders Society thinks otherwise. Descendants of the British who took American Indian land, the Founders seek to claim the relics for their own museum collection. As Syd tries to unravel the conflict, a Narragansett woman disappears, creating further complications. As both an outsider and kin, Syd owes the tribe but must figure out how to help them solve their mysteries. Lillie's second entry in the series builds on Syd's life at home and how she as a Cherokee relates to the Narragansett tribe. —*Cari Dubiel*

Boom Town.

By Nic Stone.

Oct. 2025. 288p. Simon & Schuster, $28 (9781668056271).

Stone, a YA author with a background in teen mentoring, pens her first adult thriller, set in the titular Boom Town, a strip club in Atlanta that caters to a predominantly Black clientele. Lyriq, a former dancer-turned-manager, hires an inexperienced young woman who uncannily resembles Lyriq's former partner, who went missing a couple of years before. When the new hire also vanishes, Lyriq suspects that the arrival of a charismatic and wealthy white patron is somehow connected to both women's disappearances. Through alternating perspectives and timelines, piecemeal clues, and misdirection, Stone exploits the limitations of each narrator's knowledge, biases, and assumptions to prolong tension and craft suspense. *Boom Town* grittily depicts the adult entertainment world without prejudice toward its workers, portraying these women as strong female protagonists. Readers will expect the sexually explicit scenes, and some may need to acclimate to the vernacular and vocational jargon. Stone's extreme departure from her typical fare will serve to introduce the author to an entirely new, more mature audience. *—Joelle Egan*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Readers familiar with Stone's award-winning YA books will be excited to see her enter the adult sphere with this gritty thriller.

The Day I Lost You.

By Ruth Mancini.

Dec. 2025. 352p. HarperPerennial, paper, $18.99 (9780063340596).

After their baby son Sam goes missing, Hope and Drew think their prayers have been answered when a child matching Sam's description is found in Spain, alive and well, living with a woman named Lauren. But Lauren insists that Sam is her biological son and has the paperwork to prove it. Hope, Drew, and Lauren all tell the police similar yet confusing stories about Sam's birth and disappearance, making it difficult to determine who is telling the truth. Who does Sam belong to, and how are these three people connected? With multiple (and mostly unreliable) narrators and a story told in reverse, this is a unique mystery. Readers may think they know what's going on, but Mancini (*The Woman on the Ledge*, 2024) will introduce a twist at just the right moment, making readers question everything they've read so far. The decision to start the story at the end is clever, and even if the conclusion is a bit unbelievable and wraps up a touch too neatly, mystery fans will enjoy this twisty thriller. *—Stephanie Howes*

Dead & Breakfast.

By Kat Hillis and Rosiee Thor.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593952719); e-book (9780593952726).

Arthur Miller (no connection to the playwright) is worried about the Iris Inn, the bed-and-breakfast he runs with his husband, Sal. Arthur loves Trident Falls, Oregon, but an anti-paranormal sentiment runs through a segment of the town, led by the mayor. Which is unfortunate, since Arthur and Sal are vampires. When the mayor is found dead in the Iris Inn's flower bed with two puncture wounds in his neck, the bombastic sheriff, who agreed with the mayor's policies, is all too eager to pin the murder on the resident vampires. Arthur investigates, reluctantly accepting help from the werewolf who runs the coffee shop in town as well as the human town manager and elf coroner. Flamboyant, fabulous Sal is a delightful counterpart to straight-laced Arthur, and readers who relish a good pun will find much to appreciate in Hillis and Thor's first Dead & Breakfast mystery. It has all the hallmarks of a good cozy—off-page crime, plenty of chances to puzzle out the killer with Arthur—with a delightful queer, undead twist. Lots of fun. *—Susan Maguire*

Death and the Final Cut.

By G. M. Malliet.

Nov. 2025. 256p. Severn, $29.99 (9781448314737); e-book (9781448316878).

Malliet's seventh police procedural featuring DCI Arthur St. Just and DS Fear (after *Death and the Old Master*, 2024) has the duo investigating the grisly stabbing of aging Hollywood star Agnes Derwent on the set of a movie being filmed at Cambridge's famous Round Church. Agnes was playing a blushing young bride due to marry her Viking hero, though St. Just finds it mystifying that an actress like Agnes is playing a decades-younger heroine. Eventually, St. Just discovers that Agnes had engineered things to show she's still got star power—plus she'd negotiated her contract to ensure that her handsome, much-younger husband directs the movie, despite his inexperience. It's up to St. Just and Fear to discover who killed Agnes, but with plenty of potential suspects—from Agnes' ex-husband to the stunt man to her understudy to the film's producer—it's all about figuring out who gained the most from Agnes' death. This tale of greed, revenge, and blackmail is a twisty mystery that also shines a light on the shallowness, perfidy, and fierce competition behind the glitz of show biz. *—Emily Melton*

Definitely Maybe Not a Detective.

By Sarah Fox.

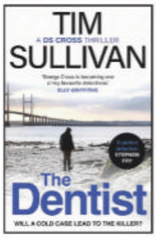
Jan. 2026. 352p. Bantam, paper, $18 (9780593984253); e-book (9780593984260).

After multiple cozy mysteries (most recently, *Tails from the Crypt*, 2025), Fox's latest features Emersyn Gray, a twenty-something juggling a tumultuous love life, the responsibilities of adulting, and trusting men after her boyfriend, Hoffman, stole most of her money. For now, there are only two good things in Emersyn's life: her bestie, Jemma, and being legal guardian for her niece Olivia after both of Olivia's parents died. Jemma comes up with a scheme to get Emersyn's money back by creating a fake detective agency to pursue Hoffman for repayment. Then Freddie, superintendent of Emersyn's apartment building, is murdered, and Mr. Nagy, Emersyn's neighbor, is accused of killing him. Nagy's wife begs her to find the real killer, which brings Emersyn into contact with sassy, wheelchair-bound teen Theo and drop-dead gorgeous Wyatt. Despite her lack of detecting experience—and being constantly diverted by Wyatt's hotness—Emersyn investigates. Part twisty murder mystery, part zany screwball comedy, part lusty romance, this will appeal to readers who like their murder stories served up with a bit of spice and chaos. *—Emily Melton*

★ The Dentist.

By Tim Sullivan.

Oct. 2025. 384p. Atlantic, paper, $17 (9780802167095); e-book (9780802167101).



Detective Sergeant George Cross is not a conventional hard-boiled or heroic cop. High-functioning, Cross is on the autism spectrum and has unique, detailed, and incisive observational skills, yet is awkward and sometimes inappropriate in his interactions with colleagues. When Leonard Carpenter, a Bristol dentist who later became unhoused, is murdered, Cross and his partner, Ottey, investigate. On the surface it seems like an open-and-shut case. Cross, however, instinctively knows there is more than meets the eye. When he learns that Carpenter's wife, Hilary, was murdered in an unsolved case years earlier, he begins to assemble the pieces of a mystifying, obfuscated puzzle. Cross investigates the investigation into Hilary's murder, cracking open artifacts and unearthing archives and looping in and questioning his retired, aloof former boss, Detective Chief Inspector Stuart MacDonald. His team feels this level of inquiry is unnecessary, but Cross is dogged in his pursuit. Speculating on a dark connection between the two murders, Cross manages, in spite of seemingly insurmountable bureaucratic roadblocks, to arrive at the chilling truth. Crime-fiction fans will keep guessing until the very end and thoroughly enjoy Sullivan's complex plotline and mosaic of characters that propel the story to its thrilling conclusion. *—George Kendall*

Evil Bones.

By Kathy Reichs.

Nov. 2025. 288p. Scribner, $27.99 (9781668051474); e-book (9781668051498).

Someone has been killing and mutilating small animals in and around Charlotte, North Carolina. Things get even more serious when it looks like the perpetrator might have upped the ante: what appears to be the remains of a human being have been found. As forensic anthropologist Temperance Brennan delves deeper into the investigation, she begins to suspect that there's a personal element to these shocking killings. But who would go to such sick lengths to get under Tempe's skin, and why? This is the twenty-fourth Brennan mystery (the first, *Deja Dead*, appeared in 1997, and won the Arthur Ellis Award for best first novel), and the series shows no signs of slowing down. Reichs continues to draw on details and experiences from her own professional life—she too is a forensic anthropologist—to give the stories a sense of realism that keeps them feeling fresh, and she always finds a way to develop a new grisly mystery that keeps us guessing. A fine addition to this popular series. —*David Pitt*

Fox and Furious.
By Rita Mae Brown.

Oct. 2025. 304p. Bantam, $30 (9780593874110); e-book (9780593874127).

Tallyho! So begins the latest book in Brown's "Sister" Jane mystery series, which centers on a passion Brown knows very well: fox (and rabbit and deer) hunting. Brown, who holds a coveted MFH designation (Master of the Fox Hounds), not-so-gently throws novices into the middle of rolling Virginia hills and estates—and then, of course, there's a murder mystery to solve. (Readers will appreciate the up-front glossary of MFH terms.) Hunt spectators and participants are many this time around, with human characters (and characters they are!) that include Sister, herself an MFH, and young widow Solange, along with talking dogs, cats, a turtle called J. Edgar Hoover, plus copious onlookers. So who did it? Guesses and gossip pinpoint obvious suspects as Brown's narrative wends its way through multiple hunts, shopping expeditions, animal magic, and unofficial investigations into the real villain. —*Barbara Jacobs*

The Fracture.
By Morgan Cry.

Nov. 2025. 304p. Severn, $29.99 (9781448315550); e-book (9781448315567).

Scottish ex-cop turned taxi driver Blake Glover returns in another brooding, atmospheric, thought-provoking escapade (following *The Cost*, 2025). When Blake sees a wrong, he feels compelled to make it right, and when an old friend of his mother's is buried in what looks like a cheap, pine coffin when a solid oak one was paid for, Blake decides to investigate what's going on at the local funeral home. Before he can sink his teeth into that problem, he receives a summons from his old nemesis, gangster Mitch Campbell. Blake can't imagine what Mitch wants, so he's shocked to learn that Mitch's wife is having an affair, and Mitch demands that Blake find out whom she's shagging. If Blake refuses, Mitch promises to make his life extremely unpleasant. What follows is a tumultuous race against time for Blake to solve both cases, but even he isn't prepared for the difficult truths that result. The bleak Scottish setting, harsh violence, and shocking outcomes are offset by Blake's caustic humor and his determination to do the right thing. A first-rate read for fans of darker, grittier whodunits. —*Emily Melton*

Friends and Liars.
By Kit Frick.

Dec. 2025. 272p. Atria/Emily Bestler, paper, $18 (9781668022535); e-book (9781668022559).

Who wouldn't accept the offer of a week, all expenses paid, in a Lake Como mansion? Clare Monroe's four college friends have doubts about returning to the scene of Clare's tragic death at her family's Italian palazzo to attend her memorial, but they are drawn inexorably to the place that still haunts them. Bringing their own secrets are Harper, Clare's best friend, now married and mother to a young son; Luca, cut off by his wealthy parents after he came out and aimless after a breakup; Sirina, a struggling actress living in New York; and filmmaker David, Clare's last boyfriend. Guilt abounds. Each person receives gifts and notes hinting that *someone* will expose their past crimes as tension mounts, and they all have much to lose, while Clare's journal entries from the day she died compound the mystery. Who is pulling the strings? Nothing is as it seems, and everyone questions their trust for one another. Frick's sophomore adult thriller (*The Split*, 2024) is another edgy page-turner, perfect for fans of Gillian Flynn and Jeneva Rose. —*Karen Clements*

The Gallagher Place.
By Julie Doar.

Dec. 2025. 360p. Zibby, paper, $17.99 (9798992377002); e-book (9798992377019).

Gray House, the Fishers' Hudson Valley vacation home, has always been Marlowe's haven, full of memories of winters and summers spent with her brothers and best friend Nora. Now grown, Marlowe is an illustrator and secret alcoholic who feels like an outsider in her own family. Something's missing for her. Some*one*. And after a dead body is discovered on the Fishers' property, the resulting mystery unearths another: what happened 20 years ago when Nora disappeared? When the police are determined to find a link between the two incidents, the Fishers close ranks—leaving Marlowe feeling all the more isolated and confused. She digs deep, uncovering family secrets, small-town tensions, and answers that might just be better left buried. This slow-build suspense novel is a strong debut; gothic elements abound, as the land around Gray House is almost its own character and the story moves between the past and present. *The Gallagher Place* is an unsettling page-turner, perfect for fans of Jennifer McMahon and Sarah Strohmeyer. —*Mala Bhattacharjee*

The Girl from Devil's Lake.
By J. A. Jance.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Morrow, $30 (9780063252639); e-book (9780063252653).

Sheriff Joanna Brady is delighted that her daughter, Jennifer, has graduated from the Police Academy and is marrying her longtime sweetheart. But Joanna also has a heartbreaking murder to solve. A child's body is found stuffed in a duffel bag near a local river. Whoever killed him left no DNA behind to help identify the body, but his clothing matches the description in a missing-person report filed by his frantic mother. Little does Joanna know that this is the work of a brutal serial killer who has committed dozens of murders dating back decades, beginning when he was just 11. His trademarks? His victims are always women or children, there are no signs of sexual assault and no DNA traces, and he always takes a "trophy" from the body. After weeks of difficult and heartbreaking investigation, Joanna is shocked by the identity of the killer. Jance's latest in her excellent Joanna Brady series (after *Blessing of the Lost Girls*, 2023) is a gripping thriller that will keep readers enthralled from first page to last. —*Emily Melton*

Grave of the Lawgiver.
By Peter Tremayne.

Oct. 2025. 368p. Severn, $29.99 (9781448315109); e-book (9781448315116).

Tremayne's latest (after *Prophet of Blood*, 2024) is another meticulously researched mystery set in the seventh century. Sister Fidelma, an advocate of the law courts and member of a noble family in what is now Ireland, travels with her husband, Eadulf, to his home in East Angles (now East Anglia in England). Eadulf hasn't been home for seven years, and he's eager to see his family, so he's horrified to learn that his uncle, Athelnoth, a gerefa (lawgiver), has died after being stabbed and then burned to death, while Eadulf's younger sister, Wulfrun, who lived with Athelnoth, is missing. A witness claims she saw two foreigners wearing the robes of the "New Faith" and (unusually for religious persons) mounted on what appeared to be warhorses. A complex story of family feuds, jealousy, religious conflicts, madness, and revenge emerges, and the truth, when Fidelma and Eadulf uncover it, is as appalling as it is sad. Packed with plentiful details about the politics, wars, social structure, and daily life in seventh-century East Angles, this one will appeal to avid fans of historical mysteries. —*Emily Melton*

Her One Regret.
By Donna Freitas.

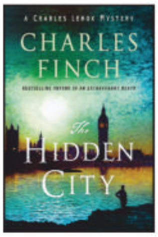
Nov. 2025. 384p. Soho, $28.95 (9781641296380); e-book (9781641296397).

In conversation with her best friend, Michelle Carvalho, Lucy Mendoza confessed that she regretted having a baby. When, on a sunny day, Lucy disappears from a grocery store parking lot, leaving Emma, her baby, in the cart, the news of a potential abduction slowly morphs into one of maternal abandonment. As a media feeding frenzy leaves the public convinced that Lucy's disappearance was planned, Michelle is the only one who insists otherwise. Meanwhile, a retired detective finds similarities between Lucy's case and that of another mother who vanished many years ago. Freitas (*The Nine Loves of Rose Napolitano*, 2019) anchors her novel on a taboo subject, regret over having children. The commendable effort of spotlighting a serious and sensitive issue notwithstanding, the story stalls as the same point about the scandal of regretting motherhood is made repeatedly. Still, the lively supporting cast of characters, including a popular podcaster and residents of the small Rhode Island town, do add zest to the mystery, which offers many red herrings. Freitas' tale and bold underlying theme will resonate with many readers. —*Poornima Apte*

The Hidden City.

By Charles Finch.

Nov. 2025. 288p. Minotaur, $29 (9781250767165); e-book (9781250767172).



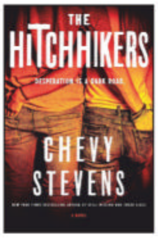
Finch's fifteenth Charles Lenox book (after *An Extravagant Death*, 2021) is both an engrossing historical mystery and a revealing commentary on politics and social prejudices in 1870s London. Wealthy aristocrat Charles Lenox runs his own detective agency, and his former landlady begs him to discover why a dodgy character is sleeping on her doorstep, terrified he intends to rob or even murder her. Then Charles receives word from India that his cousin Jasper has died, with Jasper's will appointing Charles and his wife, Jane, as guardians for Jasper's daughter, Angela. When Angela arrives, she has her dearest friend, an Indian girl named Sari, with her—which is sure to raise eyebrows in Charles' social circle. Meanwhile, Charles discovers that Jane is involved in the suffragist movement, and while he's supportive, he worries about her safety and the reputational repercussions. But his landlady's case is the mystery at the heart of this novel, leading to a troubling and dangerous investigation that takes Charles from the most respected British institutions to London's most insalubrious areas. Finch is a masterful writer whose meticulous research and gift for evoking people and places produces a richly layered, sweeping saga and a superb and mesmerizing historical mystery. —*Emily Melton*

The Hitchhikers.

By Chevy Stevens.

Oct. 2025. 384p. St. Martin's, $29 (9781250133656); e-book (9781250133663).

It's 1976. Alice and Tom have embarked on a road trip across Canada in their new RV. Their relationship has been frayed since they began trying for a baby, but they barely have a chance to reconnect before they encounter a hitchhiking couple. Alice feels sorry for Ocean and Blue; Ocean is pregnant, and the two seem to have nothing between them. She and Tom bring them along to their next RV stop. But then Alice sees a headline about two traveling killers; she recognizes them as her guests. Their real names are Simon and Jenny, and they're on the run after murdering Jenny's mother and stepfather. It isn't long before Simon and Jenny realize that their hosts are on to them, and Alice and Tom's peaceful trip turns into a nightmare. Simon holds them hostage, forcing Alice to drive and Tom to nurse a broken collarbone without medical treatment. The novel's pace is relentless as Simon pulls Alice into even more crimes. Alice's fear is palpable, and readers will breathlessly turn the pages as they wonder if Alice and Tom will make it through this terrifying journey. Stevens (*Dark Roads*, 2021) delivers a powerhouse of a book. —*Cari Dubiel*



Huguette.

By Cara Black.

Dec. 2025. 333p. Soho, $29.95 (9781641294492); e-book (9781641294508).

Cara Black wrote 21 mysteries, taking place in the 20 Parisian arrondissements, for her intrepid French detective Aimée Leduc. She also penned two WWII spy thrillers set in the City of Light, featuring the daring Kate Rees. Now she brings us Huguette, a young woman on the run amidst all the danger and deprivation of Paris after its liberation in the spring of 1945. Her father was a bootlegger during the war, and she was coerced into serving as his bookkeeper. He was killed by an angry mob, and she is still wanted for her crimes. While fleeing, Hughette learns that her baby has been sold off by nuns she'd trusted, and she gets mixed up with some nasty GI deserters running a bootlegging operation of their own. Working under an assumed name with a film director, she encounters policeman Claude Leduc, who was Aimée's grandfather and the inspiration for her detective career. Huguette's journey is extraordinary, and her courage and resourcefulness make for an engaging read. Black's fans may clamor for more of this extraordinary character. —*Jane Murphy*

Listen.

By Sacha Bronwasser. Tr. by David Colmer.

Nov. 2025. 240p. Penguin, $18 (9780143138464); e-book (9780593512531).

Philippe Lambert has always been shadowed by a disturbingly accurate sense of clairvoyance—cursed, according to his mother, by the bullfighting ring buried beneath their Paris flat. Despite his vague, slightly off-putting strangeness, he's become an executive, got married, and fathered two sons. Each year, a new au pair arrives to mind the boys, and Philippe maintains polite distance until 1986, when terrorist bombings batter Paris and the new au pair's arrival awakens his dormant sense of doom. Philippe is compelled to follow her constantly, which tests his sanity, but eventually saves her life. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, a charismatic art school professor takes Marie under her wing, wielding absolute control until Marie is eventually forced to confront her mentor's horrifying objective. Seeking rebirth, Marie takes flight to Paris as Philippe's latest au pair, heralding another disaster as Philippe's desperate stalking renders him increasingly unstable. Paris' streets are a gritty, dangerous constant here as Philippe and Marie's stories converge around a mysterious, cataclysmic event. Dutch art historian and writer Bronwasser's sensual, beautifully written story has genre-stretching appeal. —*Christine Tran*

Mirage City.

By Lev AC Rosen.

Oct. 2025. 272p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250322470); e-book (9781250322487).

A new case sends Private Investigator Evander "Andy" Mills from San Francisco to his hometown of Los Angeles in the fourth installment of Rosen's historical mystery series, after *Rough Pages* (2024). When a woman from the local branch of the Mattachine Society, a local queer-rights group, contacts Andy about three missing members, he isn't sure it will amount to much. He reluctantly follows his few leads to L.A. and soon becomes enmeshed with mysterious new friends, including a motorcycle gang with links to two of the missing members. In addition to these new acquaintances, Andy is also questioning his mother's new job at a psychiatric clinic as well as how her work relates to his case. Touching on true aspects of 1950s America for the LGBTQ community, Rose deftly covers topics like secret clubs and the horrors of conversion therapy. The plot is compelling, and the characters are complex, especially Andy and his overwhelming sense of guilt from his time working as a cop. Fans of the series will enjoy this installment. —*Elizabeth Reiser*

North Country.

By Matt Bondurant.

Nov. 2025. 394p. Blackstone, $29.99 (9798874809362).

Tragedy has factored into Tom Kaiser's life since he was seven years old, when he watched helplessly as his younger sister drowned after falling through thin ice. Tom couldn't wait to leave his upstate New York hometown. He served in Afghanistan, but an incident occurred overseas that resulted in death and Tom's incarceration. Now Tom has returned home, where his father is about to undergo a coronary bypass procedure, and the family farm is in dire financial straits. Meanwhile, local businessman Donnie LeClair needs muscle to help with debt collections. Upon hearing of Tom's quick temper, LeClair approaches him with a lucrative employment offer. Soon Tom is a key member of LeClair's organization and assists with a move that could make the group financially set or lead to their arrest. Bondurant's (*Oleander City*, 2022) absorbing novel about intersecting lives in a small town and the ripple effect of fateful decisions is infused with pathos and driven by intriguing characters and excellent plot twists. —*Philip Zozzaro*

Revenge, Served Royal.

By Celeste Connally.

Nov. 2025. 336p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250387394); e-book (9781250387400).

Lady Petra Forsyth (last seen in *All's Fair in Love and Treachery*, 2024) is excited to be asked to judge the patisserie competition sponsored by Queen Charlotte and the Prince Regent, slated to be held at Windsor Castle. The competition is only one of a series of events, which include lectures, sporting demonstrations, and a ball. Petra is looking forward to seeing the former royal chef and popular cookbook author Sir Rufus Pomeroy, of whom she has fond memories. When Pomeroy is found strangled with his valet, Beecham, standing over him, Petra begins to investigate alongside her lover, Duncan Shawcross, one of the Queen's intelligence officers. It turns out that Beecham is the brother of Petra's lady's maid, Annie, and Petra's beloved aunt Ophelia may be a suspect, lending further urgency to their investigation as Colonel Wolston, the highest-ranking officer of Windsor Castle's Coldstream Guards, seems determined to convict Beecham. This cozy's beautifully described Regency-era frame with baking details, plot twists, and a smart, feisty, competent, ahead-of-her-time heroine will please historical mystery fans. —*Sue O'Brien*

The Right to Remain.

By James Grippando.

Jan. 2026. 352p. Harper, $30 (9780063358119); e-book (9780063358201).

In the twentieth Jack Swyteck novel, the criminal defense lawyer from Florida is having trouble with his most recent client. Elliott Stafford, who stands accused of murder, has clammed up. He won't talk to anybody—not his girlfriend, not his lawyer, not anyone. Since he can't rely on his client to participate in his own defense, Jack's work just got a lot harder. But, as fans of this long-running series know, he's not the kind of guy to let a bump in the road derail him, and as he keeps digging, Jack gets a very unpleasant surprise—one that sends the whole case spinning off in a new direction. Grippando, who spent 12 years as a trial lawyer in Florida, knows whereof he writes: the Swyteck novels have a sense of realism to them, a sense of truth, that legal fiction written by non-lawyers often lacks. You don't need to have read any of the earlier Swyteck novels to enjoy this one (they all function nicely as standalones), but be warned: once you've finished this one, you will want to read more. —*David Pitt*

Tales of the Impossible.

By Bill Pronzini.

Oct. 2025. 314p. Stark House, paper, $19.95 (9798886011630).

This collection of short fiction, which spans almost the entirety of Pronzini's remarkable career, showcases his gift for crafting what might be the toughest mystery story to tell: the impossible crime. The locked-room mystery is a classic example: a crime, usually a murder, has been committed under circumstances that would seem to render an outsider committing that crime impossible. Reaching the solution requires two things: a series of brilliant deductions by the main character (who is often, but not always, a detective), and a number of clues planted by the author so that the solution feels not only logical, but fair. This book, which contains a combination of standalones and stories featuring the author's popular Nameless Detective and his Victorian-era crimesolvers Carpenter and Quincannon, presents one clever mystery after another, with each one challenging the reader to pick up on the clues and solve the crime before the main characters do. Each entry features the engaging writing that makes Pronzini such a joy to read, and *Tales of the Impossible* is a must-have for the author's legion of fans. —*David Pitt*

The Tattered Cover.

By Ellery Adams.

Oct. 2025. 320p. Kensington, $27 (9781496743824); e-book (9781496743848).

Nora Pennington, owner of the bookstore in Miracle Springs, North Carolina, has something special planned for Halloween: an appearance by an author whose new book details her life as a medium. Laura Luz has also agreed to do a psychic reading. But a storm knocks out the lights just long enough for someone to kill Luz. The seance's participants were the town pharmacist, another author, a friend, and Nora's nemesis, K-9 cop Hollowell, who despises her. Nora's fella, Miracle Spring's sheriff Grant McCabe, will hear nothing against Hollowell, despite circumstantial evidence Nora and her friends find against her. But actually, each of the participants has reasons to murder Luz. The eighth book in the Secret, Book, and Scone Society series features Adams' popular character along with the delicious descriptions of food and drink that are hallmarks of the series. The mystery of who killed Laura Luz is more notable for its resolution than its investigation, but fans will be happily satisfied. A welcome list of all the books mentioned is appended. —*Ilene Cooper*

The Widow.

By John Grisham.

Oct. 2025. 416p. Doubleday, $32 (9780385548984); e-book (9780385548991).

He'd be the first to tell you that greed had a lot to do with it. When an elderly widow, Eleanor Barnett, asks Virginia lawyer Simon Latch to draw up a new will to replace a previous will drawn up by another lawyer, Simon's not especially keen. He needs big cases, money-makers. Not this small-potatoes stuff. But when Eleanor tells him she's wealthy—we're talking millions—he's suddenly very interested. He's not trying to scam her, not like that other lawyer, but Simon knows he will earn some hefty fees for probating her estate when she dies. When Eleanor winds up in the hospital after a car accident, things rapidly go from bad to worse, and soon Simon is scrambling to defend himself against a murder charge. Grisham's latest is a perfect blend of plot and character: Simon and Eleanor come across as real, flesh-and-blood people—Eleanor, especially, is beautifully, heartbreakingly depicted—and the story is full of the kind of nail-biting suspense that makes us unable to put the book down. Looks like Grisham's got another best-seller on his hands. —*David Pitt*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Grisham's zillions of fans will be intrigued as he shifts from courtroom thrillers to a mystery featuring a lawyer accused of murder.

Historical Fiction

Boleyn Traitor.

By Philippa Gregory.

Oct. 2025. 496p. Morrow, $32 (9780063439689); e-book (9780063439665).

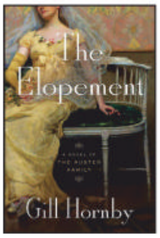
Gregory (*Dawnland*, 2022) returns to the Tudor court with an absorbing focus on Jane Boleyn, sister-in-law to Anne. Here, Jane, who narrates, emerges as a dynamic figure forced to navigate ruthless political schemes, shifting alliances, and the volatile whims of King Henry VIII. Jane enters the royal court at a young age, rising to the title of Lady Rochford after marrying into the Boleyn family. This sweeping novel traces her path as courtier to five of Henry's six wives beginning with Anne, with whom Jane shares an intimate yet tense bond. Following Anne's infamous downfall, Jane is brought back to the court at the request of Thomas Cromwell, Henry's formidable, calculating adviser. Cromwell makes Jane his informant, teaching her to strategically employ her influence as she counsels successive queens amidst Henry's hunger for a male heir. As the marriages crumble and fortunes of the myriad characters rise and fall, Jane becomes dangerously enmeshed in liaisons of her own. Richly atmospheric, Gregory's novel delivers a riveting portrait of Jane and the drama of the cunning stakes involved in trying to survive Henry's reign. —*Leah Strauss*

★ The Elopement.

By Gill Hornby.

Oct. 2025. 480p. Pegasus, $27.95 (9781639369652); e-book (9781639369669).

In August 1820, Fanny Knight of Godmersham Park, the setting for and title of Hornby's previous novel based on Jane Austen's family, received a marriage offer from widowed country neighbor Sir Edward Knatchbull. Having run a household and cared for younger siblings since age 15 with limited prospects for future offers, Fanny hesitantly accepted. As the years unfolded, there were reasons to believe she had overestimated her skills, and her young stepdaughter, Mary Dorothea, has suffered the consequences. Her journey to discovering her true worth is peppered with sorrow, joy, and admirable strength. As Hornby illuminates Fanny's experiences as a second wife and reluctant stepmother and her internal monologue justifying her actions, readers glean the prevailing social attitudes of the time. By revealing how Fanny's struggles affect Mary Dorothea's choices, Hornby details the rigid rules restricting most women's lives. Thanks to the author's ability to make her characters and their struggles engaging and relatable, this is an excellent work of detailed historical fiction and a timeless story of family and love. Interactions between extended families create natural opportunities to reference Jane Austen as a writer but more importantly as a beloved aunt and sister. This is a novel to savor. —*Stacey Hayman*



YA: *Teen readers who enjoy a long, thoughtful, and thought-provoking historical novel read will appreciate Hornby's Austen-inspired tale. SH.*

The Good Daughters.
By Brigitte Dale.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Pegasus, $27.95 (9781639369874); e-book (9781639369881).

In pre-WWI England, women were very much the property of their fathers until that status was ceded to their husbands upon marriage. Three women—Charlotte, middle class, longing for higher education; Emily, daughter of the warden of infamous Holloway prison, wanting to train as a teacher; Beatrice, upper-class schoolmate of Charlotte, desiring some life before a forced marriage—find their way to the London headquarters of the women's-suffrage movement, where they learn to put themselves in danger for a cause. Women are arrested for tiny infractions, and eventually, hunger strikes lead to cruel force-feeding and abuse. Their efforts are essentially ignored, despite legal proceedings and outrageous dramatic gestures. Beatrice must marry but secretly stays connected until freed by guile and deception. The movement is usurped by the war, though the right for women to vote does come. Knowing the price many paid is an essential piece of history, powerfully communicated in this engaging novel. —*Danise Hoover*

The Great Forgotten.
By K. L. Murphy.

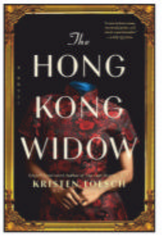
Nov. 2025. 416p. CamCat, $30.99 (9780744311907); e-book (9780744311938).

Few novels address the Great Train Wreck of 1918, possibly the deadliest train accident in U.S. history. On July 9, 1918, in Nashville, Tennessee, two passenger trains were mistakenly routed onto a single track and subsequently collided head-on at full speed. Over 100 people died, and 170 more were gravely injured. Murphy (*Her Sister's Death*, 2022) gracefully memorializes this tragedy. After moving into her grandmother's house, Ginny Campbell discovers a trunk in the attic. The treasures inside pique her curiosity and ultimately deliver her to nonagenarian Anna Mae Kennedy. However frail, Anna Mae musters the strength to weave together the stories of five men, each of whom played integral parts in the events of the day of the crash. Murphy sensitively devotes considerable attention to the lives of young Black men denied financial opportunities as sharecroppers in the rural south, pinning their hopes on factory jobs in far-flung urban centers. Much like the locomotives, the story rushes to its hurried conclusion, all while emphasizing the importance of respect, dignity, and love. —*Sarah Steers*

★ The Hong Kong Widow.
By Kristen Loesch.

Oct. 2025. 368p. Berkley, $30 (9780593548011); e-book (9780593548035).

Edgar nominee Loesch's second novel, following *The Last Russian Doll* (2023), is a twisty, gothic-tinged thriller. One late-summer night in 1953, an alleged massacre was reported at Maidenhair House in Hong Kong, but the police who responded found no evidence. Dismissed as a collective hallucination, the incident became an urban legend, but the truth was even more surreal. That night was the culmination of a six-night elimination-style competition that pitted six spirit mediums against each other in six seances in a notoriously haunted house. More than 50 years later, Mei has tried to put the past behind her until her daughter, a true-crime writer, receives an anonymous letter alleging that Mei not only survived the massacre but was also responsible. Mother and daughter return to the house seeking answers, but doing so will require Mei to reveal the truth not just about that night but also about her early life in Japanese-occupied Shanghai and her connection with the house's owner, George Maidenhair, and his Shanghainese film-star wife, who arranged the competition. Alternating between past and present, Shanghai and Hong Kong, and first- and third-person narration, Loesch weaves together a story of multigenerational trauma and the bonds between mothers and daughters. Impeccably researched, beautifully written, and completely terrifying, this book will appeal to readers of Tananarive Due and Silvia Moreno-Garcia. —*Lindsay Harmon*



YA: *Teen fans of the macabre will enjoy the creepy vibes while relating to teenage Mei's resilience in the face of trauma. LH.*

Khaled and Jamila.
By Anan Ameri.

Nov. 2025. 286p. Interlink, paper, $18 (9781623715847).

1950s Palestine. Khaled, an impressionable 18-year-old, is in love with the girl next-door and longs to join the protests against the British and Israeli colonization of his homeland. But with an eye on the family business, his father sends him to the University of Michigan. Heartsick and homesick, Khaled slowly acclimates to American culture, joins the Arab American student movement, and falls for a beguiling classmate, Elizabeth, despite their different backgrounds. Years later, Khaled's daughter, Jamila, is torn between her father, her commitment to Palestine, and her love for Ali, her brother's African American best friend. Although Khaled and Jamila have always shared a dedication to activism, Jamila suspects that Khaled's objection to Ali has more to do with race than her father will admit. As Khaled and Jamila wrangle over her choices, history seems to be repeating itself. Or is there a chance for generational family healing? Set during the pivotal early years of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, Ameri's novel portrays that era's tectonic cultural shifts which remain so very relevant to our own time. —*Lesley Williams*

YA: *Teens familiar with the immigrant and POC experience will appreciate this multigenerational, coming-of-age work set across the twentieth century, supplemented by still-relevant cultural and political movements. KF.*

The Mad Wife.
By Meagan Church.

Nov. 2025. 336p. Sourcebooks/Landmark, paper, $17.99 (9781464236747); e-book (9781464236754).

Lulu Mayfield is just trying to hold it together as a 1950s suburban housewife amid expectations as rigid as her famed gelatin desserts and as monotonous as her green stamps—a life very different from her rural upbringing. After giving birth to her second child, she becomes obsessed with and later horrified by the new neighbors across the street. As she starts to spiral, she worries what lengths her husband will go to in order to bring her to heel, and only finds solace in sharing her insomnia with a (possibly) stray cat. She can't trust her friends, her husband, or the doctor foisted upon her—and maybe not even herself—until the threat of a lobotomy becomes all too real. The tension in Church's latest (after *The Girls We Sent Away*, 2024) is palpable, with perfectly timed twists in this nod to Sylvia Plath. Book clubs will find much

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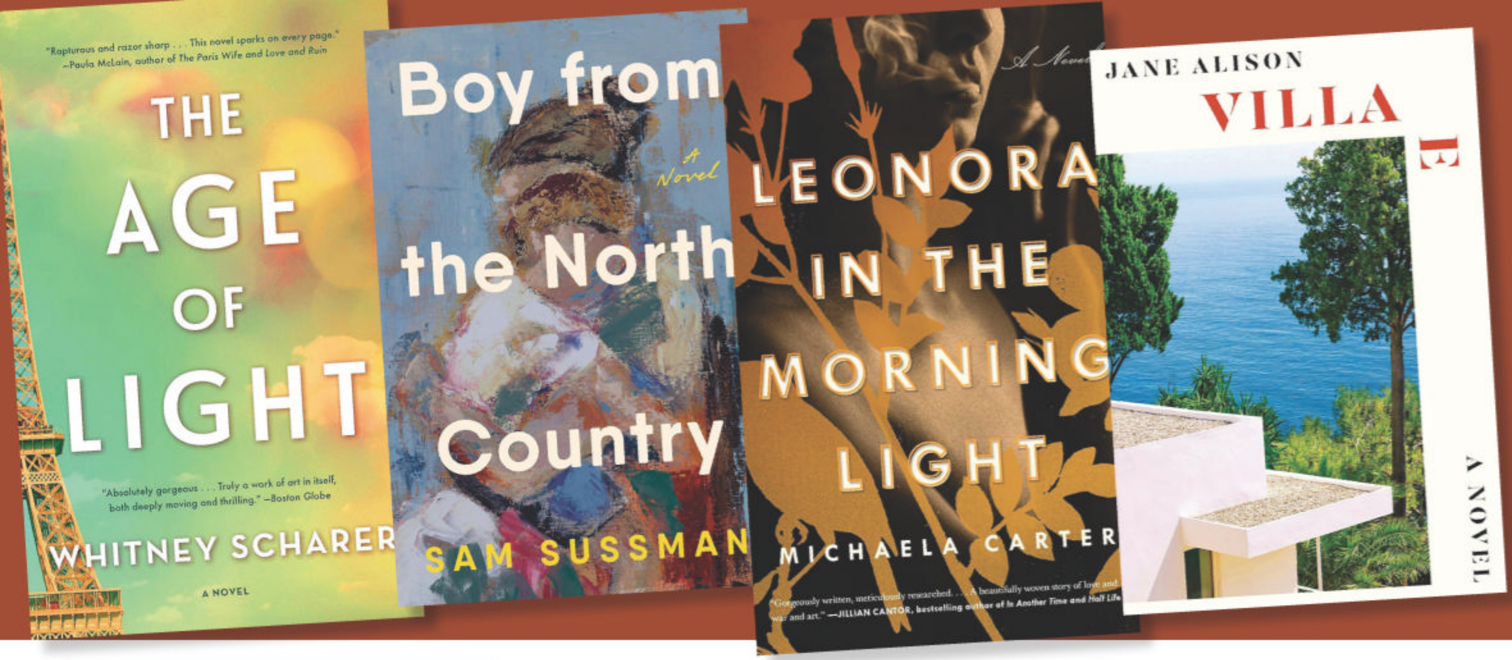
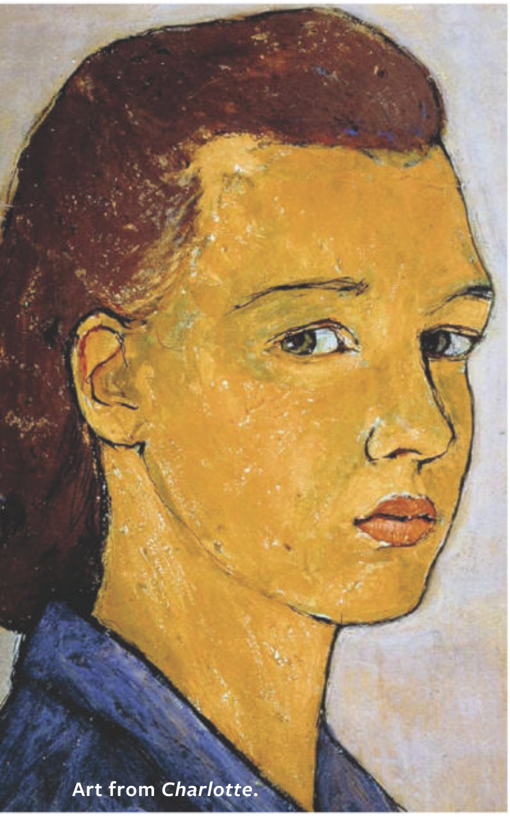

"Rapturous and razor sharp . . . This novel sparks on every page." —Paula McLain, author of The Paris Wife and Love and Ruin
THE AGE OF LIGHT
"Absolutely gorgeous . . . Truly a work of art in itself, both deeply moving and thrilling." —Boston Globe
WHITNEY SCHARER
A NOVEL
Boy from the North Country
A Novel
SAM SUSSMAN
A Novel
LEONORA IN THE MORNING LIGHT
MICHAELA CARTER
JANE ALISON
VILLA E
A NOVEL

Focus on **Arts Fiction**

Booklist Essentials

Novels about Real-Life Artists

by Donna Seaman


Art from *Charlotte*.

Novelists love to write about groundbreaking, true-life visual and performing artists. They're intrigued with the mysteries of the creative process and inspired by the art their subjects created and by all the obstacles and adversity they had to overcome. After deep research and thoughtful analysis, these writers empathically fictionalized the stories of historic painters, architects, actors, an opera singer, a singer/songwriter, and a photographer, introducing readers to brilliant and driven individuals who lived dramatic, sometimes tragic, sometimes exhilarating lives, many profoundly or catastrophically impacted by WWII.

The Age of Light. By Whitney Scharer. 2018. Little, Brown, $28 (9780316524087).

Scharer adds psychological depth and nuance to the gripping and heart-wrenching story of Lee Miller, fashion model turned WWII photojournalist, for whom surrealist artist Man Ray was lover and mentor in Paris, until she left the glamorous life to document the horrors of war, becoming one of the first to photograph the death camps.

Alchemy of a Blackbird. By Claire McMillan. 2023. Atria, $28 (9781668006559)

McMillan explores the life and personality of the too-little-known Spanish Mexican painter Remedios Varo in this inventive and mesmerizing tale of WWII, forgery, exile, mysticism, and creativity, dramatizing the artist's escape from France to Mexico with Peggy Guggenheim's help as well as Remedios' deep tarot studies and artistic and spiritual quest.

Boy from the North Country. By Sam Sussman. Sept. 2025. Penguin, $29 (9780593835050).

In Sussman's autobiographical first novel, Evan is told that he has an uncanny resemblance to Bob Dylan. Flashbacks to his mother's past bring Dylan into focus along with renowned acting teacher Stella Adler and painter Norman Raeben in a ravishing and cathartic tale of creativity, fame, angst, and a son's evolving understanding of his remarkable mother's love and sacrifice.

Charlotte. By David Foenkinos. Tr. by Sam Taylor. 2016. Overlook, $26.95 (9781468312768).

French novelist Foenkinos' crystalline novel illuminates the anguished life and inventive and haunting lifework of German Jewish artist Charlotte Salomon, from her secret-laced Berlin childhood to her attempts to elude the Nazis in the south of France while working feverishly on her painted autobiographical opus, *Life? or Theater?*, a masterpiece that survived after Charlotte, 26-years-old and pregnant, was killed at Auschwitz.

Disobedient. By Elizabeth Fremantle. 2023. Pegasus, $26.95 (9781639364152).

Fremantle vividly and imaginatively tells the story of Artemisia Gentileschi, Renaissance artist and feminist icon who painted audacious portraits of women in mythology and the Bible in spite of being raped by her painting teacher and enduring torture at the trial, persevering to become the first woman member of Florence's Accademia delle Arti del Disegno.

Leonora in the Morning Light. By Michaela Carter. 2021. Simon & Schuster/Avid Reader, $27 (9781982120511).

Carter's deeply empathic recreation of a pivotal time in Leonora Carrington's traumatic life of creativity against all odds begins in 1937, when the 19-year-old mystical animal-lover, debutante, and rebel is studying art in London and embarks on an affair with surrealist artist Max Ernst. They find bliss in Provence, until Germany invades France, leading to Max's internment and Leonora's catastrophic breakdown and eventual recovery and renewal in Mexico, where she became close friends with Remedios Varo.

The Lost Masterpiece. By B. A. Shapiro. 2025. Algonquin, $29 (9781643756370).

Skeptical and flinty Tamara Rubin, working for a biotech startup in Boston, has her life upended by staggering disclosures regarding her family tree, Nazi art theft, and the shocking arrival of a glorious and strangely bewitching "lost masterpiece" by Édouard Manet that portrays his fellow painter Berthe Morisot, whose story shapes Shapiro's supernatural art thriller.

Miss Del Río. By Bárbara Mujica. 2022. Graydon, $17.99 (9781525899935).

Mujica inhabits the life of international film icon Dolores del Río through the eyes of stylist Mara, a fictional friend modeled on Mujica's real mother, who was also a hairdresser in 1920s Los Angeles. The novel tracks Dolores' experiences from the early days of Hollywood to the mid-century Golden Age of Mexican cinema to her later years as a beloved philanthropist.

The Museum of Modern Love. By Heather Rose. 2018. Algonquin, paper, $15.95 (9781616208523).

Rose's deeply involving novel was inspired by famed performance artist Marina Abramović's *The Artist Is Present*—a now-legendary 2010 work at New York's Museum of Modern Art during which she sat in rigorous stillness for 75 long days as 1,545 people, one-by-one, sat across from her. Here, an intriguing cast of characters sit with the artist, including guilt-ridden film composer Arky Levin, a recently widowed art teacher from Georgia, a Japanese-Dutch PhD candidate, a Muslim art critic, and the ghost of Abramović's Serbian war-hero mother.

The Queen of Sugar Hill. By ReShonda Tate. 2024. Morrow, $19.99 (9780063291072).

In 1940, Hattie McDaniel became the first Black person to receive an Academy Award, for her performance as Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*, but in the years that followed, white studio executives ignored her requests for more substantial roles, continuing to cast her as a servant. Tate's historical novel illuminates McDaniel's professional and personal struggles.

The Unexpected Diva. By Tiffany L. Warren. 2025. Morrow, $19.99 (9780063322134).

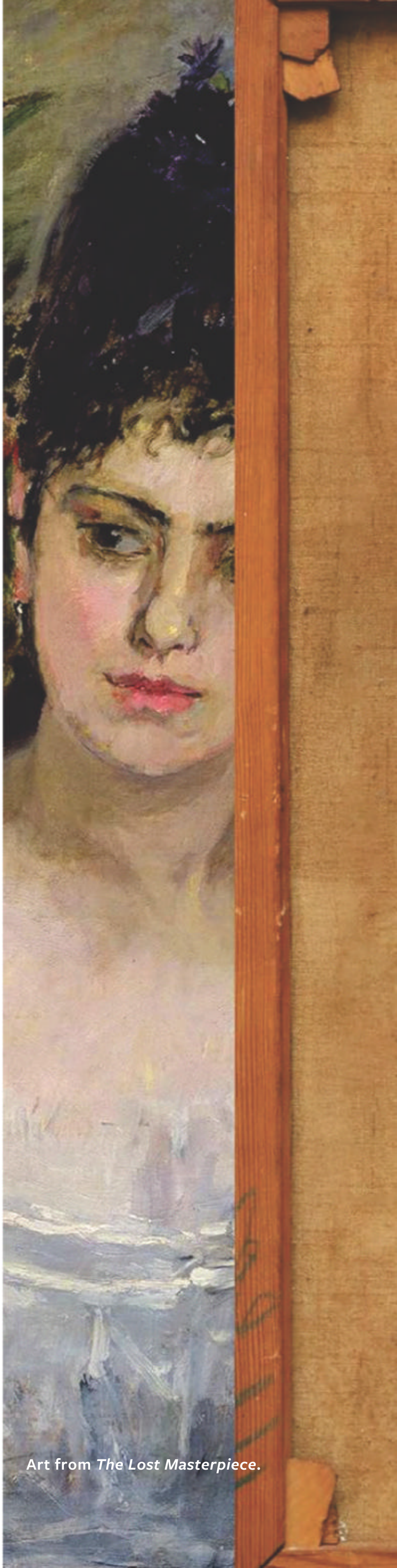
Warren recreates the hardships and triumphs of Eliza Greenfield, a gifted vocalist with a three-octave range and a Black woman in America in the 1850s, where her options are limited. Segregated theaters, slave catchers, and pervasive racism are ever-present concerns. Warren dramatizes Eliza's historic accomplishments and tenacity.

Villa E. By Jane Alison. 2024. Norton/Liveright, $23.99 (9781324095057).

In Southern France, Villa E, the radically organic 1920s creation of Irish designer Eileen Gray, is a masterpiece and a bone of contention when Gray's architect lover takes credit for her work and famed architect Le Grand, a bravura version of Le Corbusier, scandalously desecrates the pristine structure in a mad frenzy of jealousy and lust.

The Village Idiot. By Steve Stern. 2022. Melville, $27.99 (9781612199825).

Stern conjures the tumultuous life and vibrant work of Russian Jewish painter Chaim Soutine in this kinetically inventive novel, capturing the vision and vehemence of Soutine's thickly textured, writhing, nearly hallucinatory paintings in sync with the slovenliness, hunger, and chaos of his early years in Paris, his transformative success, and the terrors of the German occupation.



Art from *The Lost Masterpiece*.

Continued from p.45

to discuss about the unattainable expectations placed on women throughout history, the lengths that grief and isolation will take us to, and the fact that mental health cannot be separated from general health. —*Maribeth Fisher*

On A Sundown Sea: A Novel of Madame Tingley and the Origins of Lomaland.

By Jill G. Hall.

Oct. 2025. 256p. She Writes, paper, $18.99 (9781647429881); e-book (9781647429898).

Around the turn of the twentieth century, Katherine Tingley lives a fairly normal life. Newly into her forties, she is married, has a dog, and works at a mission feeding the poor. Behind the scenes, though, things are slowly beginning to change. Her husband neglects her, and there is never enough to help the constantly increasing stream of immigrants. Plus, Katherine has visions of the future. When she meets a man named William Q. Judge, who praises her abilities, she decides to leave everything behind, become Madam Tingley, and found a society on the sundown sea—Lomaland, a utopia. However, there is always a dark side, even in the most enlightened of communities, and Lomaland's is waiting. With page-turning prose and engrossing characters, Hall takes the reader on a journey told through the eyes of an idealist who must come to grips with the darkness that surrounds her and the betrayal that lurks around every corner. In her quest to do good things for the people who deserve them most, she contends with the complexity of humanity in this intriguing novel. —*Lily Hunter*

Sonora.

By Jenni L. Walsh.

Oct. 2025. 400p. Harper Muse, paper, $18.99 (9781400246779).

Based on the real-life, death-defying Carver Diving Horses show, Walsh's latest (after *Ace, Marvel, Spy*, 2025) delivers the excitement, grit, and determination of Sonora Carver and her horse-diving career. During the Great Depression, Sonora answers a newspaper ad and pursues adventure in show business. Leaning in to her love of horses and skills at diving, Sonora trains to become the face of the Carver family's horse-diving act. Marrying into the family, she is consumed by the show, and when tragedy strikes, she knows the show must go on. Using her keen senses, she delivers a spectacular show that runs for years. Fans who were introduced to Sonora's story in the 1991 film *Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken* will be pleased to find more detail here, based on Sonora's own memoir. The novel delves into the Carver family dynamic, the risks of the sport, the family's battle with the SPCA, and the role that women played in the rise of carnival acts. Sonora's story is about not giving up in the face of setbacks. An inspirational tale. —*Emily Borsa*

Romance

And Then There Was the One.

By Martha Waters.

Oct. 2025. 352p. Atria, paper, $19 (9781668069578); e-book (9781668069585).

Places like Buncombe-upon-Woolly are not supposed to have crime sprees. Yet in the course of less than a year, the quaint Cotswold village has become the scene of four murders. Well, actually five murders if you ask Georgiana "Georgie" Radcliffe, who believes there is something distinctly fishy about Councilman Bertie Penbaker's recent demise. When the local police rule the councilman's death an accident, Georgie enlists the help of world-famous detective Delacey Fitzgibbons. After arriving at the train station to pick up her guest, Georgie discovers Delacey has delegated his sleuthing duties to his secretary, Sebastian Fletcher-Ford, whose primary skills as far as Georgie can determine seem to be flirting with females and looking stylish. Waters' (*Christmas Is All Around*, 2024) latest cleverly crafted novel is not only a brilliant hybrid of romance and mystery, it is also a love letter to the delights of Golden Age detective novels by the likes of Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers. Infused with a delectably dry sense of humor, graced with an unforgettable cast of characters, and written with charm to spare, this is pure reading bliss. —*John Charles*

And Then There Was You.

By Sophie Cousens.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Penguin/G. P. Putnam's Sons, paper, $19 (9780593718926).

Once again, Cousens (*Is She Really Going Out with Him?*, 2024) proves that she can add an element of surprise and elevate a traditional rom-com to the next level. Her use of a sf twist may throw some of her fans for a loop, but readers will be rewarded with a sweet and witty romance with multifaceted characters and Cousens' trademark warmth. Chole Fairway seemed destined to succeed; at university she wrote and starred in plays. But ten years later, she's still a production assistant, has gone through a bad breakup, and lives with her parents. At her wit's end, she decides to try an exclusive dating service and is shocked when her first date is a smashing success. Rob is handsome, caring, funny, and charming. So she asks him to her ten-year college reunion. Her life has been a flop, but maybe a hot guy on her arm will give her the confidence she needs to face old and very successful friends. As she reconnects with her old crew, Chloe realizes that success doesn't guarantee happiness, and that perhaps true love had been right there all along. —*Patricia Smith*

Burning Daylight.

By Emily McIntire.

Oct. 2025. 544p. Sourcebooks/Bloom, paper, $18.99 (9781464246975).

Years ago, Juliette Calloway literally ran into the hottest guy she'd ever seen. She never forgot his perfectly mussed floppy hair and tattoos, and the spark reignited when they reconnected briefly at an art gallery opening for the artist RMO. The only thing that could put a damper on the heat is the identity of her mystery man. A hidden heir thought to be deceased, Roman Montgomery is enemy number one to the Calloways of Rosebrook Falls. He reveals himself to help his sister, in turn crushing any chances he had to have a public relationship with Juliette. They should stay away from each other, but they can't resist each other's magnetism. So, they spend their evenings meeting in secret, creating art and romance together, then during the day they play the roles of dutiful Calloway and Montgomery royalty. With the start of her Defying the Stars series, McIntire offers a fresh take on *Romeo and Juliet* that should delight fans of romance retellings, while immersing readers in fair Rosebrook Falls. —*Amia Wheatley*

Cover Story.

By Mhairi McFarlane.

Oct. 2025. 384p. Avon, paper, $18.99 (9780063292574); e-book (9780063292581).

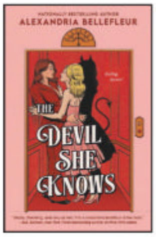
It's just three months. That is what Isabel "Bel" Macauley tells herself after Connor Adams, the new intern—well, new to journalism but actually as old as Bel herself—arrives at the office of the Manchester newspaper where Bel works. Bel can certainly survive three months working with the taciturn-to-a-fault, totally hot Connor before Connor moves on career-wise. Then Bel gets an unexpected tip about a scummy politician that could lead to a major triumph. But when Connor unexpectedly bumps into Bel out in public while she is working undercover, the only way Bel can preserve her scoop is by pretending that Connor is her new boyfriend. In her latest marvelously entertaining romance, McFarlane (*Between Us*, 2023) makes effective use of a workplace enemies-to-lovers situation between her relatably messy protagonists to create plenty of snarky banter and simmering sexual chemistry. McFarlane adds real-world details and depth to all this rom-com wonderfulness with her thoughtful exploration of darker life issues, such as predatory politicians, stalking exes, and depression. —*John Charles*

The Devil She Knows.

By Alexandria Bellefleur.

Oct. 2025. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593952504); e-book (9780593952511).

After blowing her proposal to Hannah Liu, pastry chef Samantha "Sam" Cooper would give anything for a second chance at romance with the love of her life. Fortunate-



ly, Daphne, the devilishly attractive woman Sam meets in the elevator of her apartment building just hours after Hannah dumps her, might be able to help. It turns out Daphne is a devil working for Lucifer himself, and she will grant Sam six wishes in exchange for her soul. To be honest, it isn't like Sam is really doing anything with her soul right now, and having six chances to win back Hannah seems like the deal of the century. It is only after signing on the dotted line that Sam begins to truly understand the old saying, *Be careful what you wish for*. Bellefleur (*Truly, Madly, Deeply*, 2024) brilliantly deploys her devilishly clever wit in her latest superbly satisfying, sweetly sexy sapphic love story for which many readers would happily sell their own souls to possess a copy. —*John Charles*

The Eight Heartbreaks of Hanukkah.

By Jean Meltzer.

Oct. 2025. 352p. MIRA, paper, $18.99 (9780778334422); e-book (9780369736291).

Evelyn is spending Hanukkah running rehearsals for *A Christmas Carol*. As producer, she's hoping that this achievement will finally catapult her to working on film. When she runs into a piano and blacks out, she is treated by her ex-husband David, who is filling in for the studio medic. In the aftermath, she passes out each night and is visited by ghosts showing significant moments in her past with David. The ghosts range from people to a puppet from her current production to the laughter of an unborn child. Evelyn has always worked hard for long hours to avoid emotions. David left Evelyn a few years back after they lost a baby, and he could not get her attention as she obsessed over work. Meltzer (*Magical Meet Cute*, 2024) expertly adds humorous details about David's failed dates and Evelyn's dealing with the diva starring in the production even as they revisit their sorrows. Their path to a new start together ultimately delivers a satisfying ending in this delightful holiday story. —*Amy Alessio*

The Marriage Method.

By Mimi Matthews.

Nov. 2025. 416p. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593639313); e-book (9780593639320).

Unlike many young women, Penelope "Nell" Trewlove is not in London looking for a husband. Instead, Nell, the assistant headmistress at Miss Corvus' Benevolent Academy for the Betterment of Young Ladies, is searching for a missing student. Miles Quincey, editor in chief of the *London Courant*, believes there may be a connection between the Academy and Lawrence Cowgill, the newspaper's missing gossip columnist. However, while engaging in an interview with Nell in his office, Miles becomes caught up in a completely innocent yet totally compromising situation with the annoyingly taciturn Nell. Now the only way Nell can keep her personal reputation above reproach and Miles can keep his professional reputation intact is for the two of them to get married. With the second addition to her Victorian-set Crinoline Academy series, following *Rules for Ruin* (2025), Matthews artfully crafts an intriguing plot spiked with danger and enhanced with a generous dose of dry wit while simultaneously matching up a formidably feminist, quietly forceful heroine with a fiercely observant, feline-loving hero. The end result is delightful. —*John Charles*

Next Time Will Be Our Turn.

By Jesse Q. Sutanto.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593816875); e-book (9780593816882).

Izzy is dreading another lavish Chinese New Year dinner with the whole Chen clan. At 73, Nainai (grandmother) is still "a sight to behold," even more so as she's kissing her date, "a striking Caucasian woman." "What the fuck" seems the most common response. Long before she was Nainai, Magnolia was Izzy's age—16—in 1998, when she left Jakarta for Los Angeles to join older sister Iris for junior college. "It is a tragedy," she tells Izzy, to meet the love of your life so young, but Magnolia met Ellery—22, "and a she"—too soon. Nainai reveals their impossible love story, including the paths she chose to become "the baddest" because only Nainai *sees* Izzy; "I know who you are . . . I hate that . . . this place . . . doesn't allow you to be fully yourself." The chronology seems utterly disheartening. If Magnolia was 16 in 1998, and she's 73 now, then this is New Year 2055(ish). Is LGBTQIA identity still so threatened decades ahead? Prolific Sutanto presents more page-turning fiction with empathy, humor, and just enough bite. —*Terry Hong*

Secret Nights and Northern Lights.

By Megan Oliver.

Nov. 2025. 384p. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593952405); e-book (9780593952412).

Mona is thrilled to have a chance to write about international travel after covering local fairs for her job at a magazine. But a proposed trip to Iceland includes photographer Ben, her first love who broke her heart 14 years ago. Ben was close with her brothers and family, but after they slept together on Mona's seventeenth birthday, he broke it off with her and disappeared from their lives. Now, as they travel among the majestic sites of Iceland, they draw close again. Mona learns about family struggles that kept them apart. Ben is ready for another chance with the woman he never forgot. At each of the beautifully described Icelandic stops on their itinerary, Mona grows from the physical challenges of the terrain. They each hid some reasons for their presence on the trip, and sorting their past plus present conflicts adds layers to a satisfying romance. Oliver pens a moving second chance romance against the vivid backdrop of Iceland. —*Amy Alessio*

Sense and Suitability.

By Pepper Basham.

Oct. 2025. Thomas Nelson, paper, $17.99 (9780840717061).

In 1811, Emmeline Lockhart's first season ended in scandal when Simon Reeves broke off their relationship instead of proposing. Two years later, Simon has returned to take on the family title and his predecessor's numerous debts. Besmirched by the failed proposal, Emme has no reason to show Simon kindness, but meeting the siblings he must raise triggers her need to help those in need. As Simon reveals more about his family's troubles, Emme struggles with that, sharing she's a successfully published author. Both worry that their relationship will be judged as being improper, but together they can overcome the obstacles in their way. Filled with romantic drama caused by misunderstandings and poor timing, the pace is quick, while the charming characters and their consistently good-hearted approach to dealing with conflicts and other difficulties make this novel sparkle. Emme's secret writing career and Simon learning to appreciate women writers allow fun references to Jane Austen. Solid historical details, an entertaining enemies-to-lovers progression, and many comedic scenes make this is a great choice for readers looking for a light, satisfying romance. —*Stacey Hayman*

YA: *Teens will enjoy the quick pace and humorous situations the characters get themselves into, while the historical detail will spark curiosity. SH.*

Yours for the Season.

By Emily Stone.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Dell, paper, $19 (9780593982952); e-book (9780593982969).

It's Christmastime, and there's nothing Mel needs for a present. She's got a successful jewelry business (although she's too busy to do the designing she loves), she's got her flat in London (which feels half empty), and she's got her best friend, Priya (who's in Australia). So when her ruggedly handsome ex, Finn, who brutally dumped her six months ago, shows up to propose they spend the holiday with his family, she wants to refuse. But he says it would mean a lot to his mother, to whom Finn has lied, saying they've gotten back together. Mel figures she can do the dumping this time around. So she heads to a cozy cottage in Scotland for the week, and while there she sees that their relationship crumbled not from lack of love but under the pressure of living up to outside expectations. Oh, and the rest of the family may also be keeping secrets. For readers seeking Christmas coziness, Stone's latest (after *A Winter Wish*, 2024) is the perfect book to curl up with under a warm blanket with mug of hot chocolate. —*Pamela Gardner*

Continued on p.52

Self-Published Books Showcase

These books are recommended by *BlueInk Review,* a fee-based review service. Every month, *BlueInk* will compile a list of their favorite self-published titles for *Booklist,* as a service to librarians hoping to incorporate self-published work into their collections. *BlueInk* was founded by Patti Thorn, former book review editor of Denver's *Rocky Mountain News*, and Patricia Moosbrugger, a literary agent who represents several best-selling authors. The company delivers professional, unbiased reviews of self-published books written by critics drawn largely from major mainstream publications and by editors from prominent publishing houses. Stars reflect the decisions of *BlueInk* reviewers and editors. *Booklist* is happy to bring this curated collection of the best in self-publishing for adults and youth to our audience.

from

blueink REVIEW

Adult

AI for Everyone: The Hands-On Beginner's Guide.

By Roland Sharman.

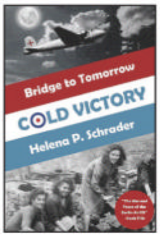
2025. 107p. RGM Sharman, paper, $12.99 (9783950587111). 004.

This book from Sharman, who has 30 years of experience as a programmer, is a basic instruction manual for AI beginners. He characterizes AI as a useful tool that learns from looking at data and examples. It spots patterns and, after practice, "can make decisions." Sharman offers a comprehensive list of free and safe AI tools. Using some of these tools, he guides readers through every step of their use, from locating the tools' websites to polishing their final products. He also furnishes exemplar stories about the use of AI tools. For instance, aspiring mechanic Jayden asks AI, "How can AI help me learn car repair?" He then receives "a list of free apps that show repair tutorials." Sharman acknowledges that AI can make mistakes by not having enough experience or by misunderstanding a question. In his eagerness to promote AI, he's sometimes patronizing, repeatedly saying things like, "Give yourself a huge cheer," and he minimizes AI's capacity for eradicating jobs. Nonetheless, this is an excellent instruction manual, perfect for anyone's first approaches to AI.

★ Cold Victory: A Novel of the Berlin Airlift, Part III.

By Helena P. Schrader.

2025. 514p. Cross Seas, paper, $23.95 (9798987177044).



This dramatic conclusion to Schrader's Bridge to Tomorrow trilogy, which focuses on the post-WWII Berlin Airlift, opens where *Cold War* (2023) left off in December of 1948. Favorite characters from earlier books continue the joint British and U.S. efforts to break the Russian blockade of Allied-controlled Berlin by delivering critical goods to the city by air. Mila, introduced earlier in the series, evolves into one of the novel's most complex characters as her desire to defect to the West becomes crucial to the Airlift's success, and she takes an enormous risk to aide in the rescue of a series regular. Meanwhile, through new character Anna, a Black Emergency Air Services nurse, Schrader examines race relations during the postwar period. The novel also explores the evacuation of hospital patients out of Berlin and the Soviet weaponization of rape during WWII. As always, Schrader's pacing is superb as she flawlessly interweaves intriguing subplots into the narrative, adding a layer of complexity to underlying historical events. In all, this is a remarkable conclusion to the series.

★ The Cybersecurity Power Play: A Boardroom Guide to Digital Defense.

By Krishna Rajagopal.

2025. 176p. Notion, paper, $19.99 (9798899293603). 005.8.

THE CYBERSECURITY POWER PLAY
KRISHNA RAJAGOPAL

Recent advances in AI have provided yet another powerful tool for tech-savvy criminals to invade systems, expose data, and hold organizations hostage with ransomware attacks. Here, digital forensics expert Rajagopal warns board members of corporations and large public entities that it's their responsibility to understand the potential threats and work to defend against a variety of digital attacks. "It's like reinforcing the hull of your ship before the storm hits," he writes, "not waiting to patch holes after it's already taken on water." The author provides numerous examples of organizations that have handled cybersecurity vigilance well, contrasting these with entities who haven't, such as consumer credit reporting agency Equifax and retail giant Target, two companies that suffered massive data breaches. Rajagopal offers details of various cybercrime incursions, including viruses, phishing scams, Trojan horse attacks, and even AI deepfakes. He also shares viable defenses to such actions. His writing is clean and concise but also comprehensive. While the book is directed toward current and prospective board members, anyone who meaningfully engages with technology will find this an excellent overview of the subject.

★ The Finest Line.

By Tegan Kane.

2025. 414p. Scarlet Vault, $29.99 (9798311774994).

THE FINEST LINE
TEGAN KANE

The first book in author Kane's proposed Warehouse District Trilogy, this compelling sapphic, dystopian romance is set in the 2050s in the twin cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. A relationship is blossoming between proud lesbian bar-owner Christine and her conflicted Mormon paramour, Dr. Oakland Pratt, at a time when gay rights are being eroded locally by an overly zealous, right-wing government fronted by a Trumpian governor and his power-hungry wife. As the novel progresses, Oakland begins to question the religious values instilled in her by her father, a leading figure in the Mormon church, and eventually realizes she'll have to choose whether to continue to represent the intolerant Mormon doctrines or to embrace the liberal, sex-positive attitudes of Christine and her peers. This is a witty, insightful, and righteously indignant commentary on the reemergence of far right-wing ideologies. The story also functions as a celebratory coming-out narrative. Christine and Oakland are a beautifully realized couple, and their romance and sexual relationship are sensitively handled throughout. With explicit sexual content, this is a satisfyingly subversive story that will appeal to both LGBTQ+ romance fans and to readers of dystopian fiction seeking an engaging new series.

★ First Elite.

By Emmanuel M. Arriaga.

2025. 498p. EA Starchilde, paper, $19.99 (9798992323009).

EMMANUEL M. ARRIAGA
FIRST ELITE
FOUNDRA SERIES

Arriaga's third—and presumably concluding—sf novel set in his Foundra universe follows the Founder's Elite, a group of heroes, as they battle the evil forces of the Twin Galaxies. Told in a tantalizingly nonlinear style, the novel is essentially two intertwining stories. One follows the tumultuous life of Uriel Kervid, the first Elite chosen by the three Founders of the Huzien Empire to lead a team of virtually indestructible fighters. Uriel's story focuses on the origin of the Elite. The other narrative, set more than 20,000 years later, chronicles Neven Kenk, a member of the Elite struggling to cope with the recent murder of his wife, whom he has just discovered was pregnant when she was killed by infamous galactic terrorist Entradis. Kenk sets out to find and murder his wife's killer—but what he discovers is completely unexpected and life-changing. Bombshell plot twists abound in each story line, along with exceptional world building, fascinating backstory, and fully developed characters, all bound into a book with simply stunning production design, including maps, schematics, and illustrations. This is an excellent read, highly recommended for sf fans.

Help Yourself! . . . A Story of FBI Corruption.

By Martin L. Kaiser III.

2024. 190p. Trafford, paper, $16.99 (9781698717616). 364.132.

In this volume, a former maker of surveillance devices reflects on his life. Beginning in the 1960s, Kaiser was to the U.S. intelligence community what "Q" was to James Bond: a man with carte blanche to build the most space-age listening devices imaginable. These included radio frequency detectors, multiline phone analyzers, and one of the first nonlinear junction detectors. His clients were Fortune 500 companies, U.S. military agencies, and the FBI, CIA, DEA, and Secret Service. Known as "the Michelangelo of Electronic Surveillance," Kaiser met with high-level brass, taught and lectured worldwide, and consulted on the Jerry Bruckheimer movie *Enemy of the State*. His career was derailed, however, when his testimony before a U.S. House committee backfired, and he ended up on trial for illegal wiretapping, of which he was found not guilty. The author discusses his childhood and career path and offers many pictures and technical details of his inventions, sometimes leavened with humor (one oversized surveillance kit "was nicknamed the '2Hern' because it would give you a double hernia if you tried to lift it"). Although the book includes some technical jargon, it will interest anyone who likes a coming-of-age story mixed with espionage.

Hummingbird Moonrise: Murder, Tea and Crystals.

By Sherri L. Dodd.

2025. 279p. Black Rose, paper, $22.95 (9781685136581).

Dodd's compelling paranormal thriller centers on Arista Kelly and her family, or lack thereof. After the recent loss of her parents, all Arista has left is her Great Aunt Bethie. Their family has suffered numerous tragedies since moving to California from Ireland decades earlier; they often talked about having been cursed. Now Auntie Bethie's friend Iris has gone missing. Auntie Bethie and Iris practice witchcraft, as does Arista, to a more intuitive degree. While exploring Iris' disappearance, Arista and Bethie discover that Iris' grandmother had cursed the entire Kelly family line. The more Arista learns, the more she realizes that Iris might not be that friendly after all. Dodd weaves a delicious tale of witchcraft, curses, and missing persons set in a small California town. She's especially skilled at pacing and character reveal, creating a story that burns in slowly increasing intensity. Fans of women's paranormal fiction will eagerly turn pages to learn if Arista can stop the curse that's haunted her family for five generations.

Love in a Dark Place.

By Geoffrey Douglas.

2025. 229p. Greenleaf, $26.95 (9798886453300).

Douglas' well-written novel opens in 2018, when 61-year-old former sex worker Sarah is found dead in the Shawsheen River in northeast Massachusetts. The police briefly question Harry, an aging professor who knew the victim in her final days. What they don't know is that Sarah and Harry, once a young, eager reporter covering Atlantic City, were lovers, then friends, then barely acquaintances. The friendship ended when Harry investigated up-and-coming boxer Tyrone "Cyclone" Everett, who had a connection to Sarah. Tyrone refused to throw a fight and lost everything in the process. Harry was forced to choose between telling an important story at his peril—or walking away. The narrative alternates between Atlantic City in the 1980s and around 2017, when Sarah turns up desperate on Harry's doorstep. Journalist Douglas once covered Atlantic City himself, and his story seems richest and most authentic when set there. But the characters are so memorable that readers will be swept into the narrative as Harry looks for some measure of justice for Sarah and Tyrone—and a way to redeem himself.

Lullaby of Love: Selected Poems.

By Rebecca Winning.

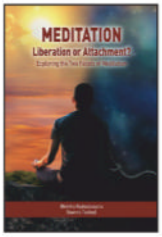
2025. 90p. Indian Paintbrush Poets, paper, $29 (9781735773131). 811.

Winning's fine new poetry collection invites readers into an everyday life made luminous and strange by the quiet power of her images and insights. Her subjects are common enough—love, joy, hope, betrayal, sorrow—but the language describing these experiences is uncommonly arresting. For example, "Sisters" depicts an ordinary visit between siblings that unfolds to reveal mysteries of love and affection: "Each visit a celebration: we window shop, / drink tea, repot some plants, and / flip through magazines. The sun softens / your kitchen with its last light. We boil spaghetti / [. . .] I am in love with this respectable love. Vermeer should have painted you." The poet delivers masterful imagery on nearly every page: a "wick of sun"; a mouse's "black eyes / bright as beaded ink"; an "open-mouthed astonishment of moon"; "pine trees [. . .] swaying / in Pentecostal ecstasy." With such language, she makes the world new and fresh. As Robert Frost, another poet of domestic life and small moments, once noted, "The poem is done when it comes shut with a snap or a click." Readers will hear many such clicks while reading this worthy collection.

★ Meditation: Liberation or Attachment? Exploring the Two Facets of Meditation.

By Bhikkhu Nyānadassana (Ioannis Tselios).

2025. 308p. Theravada Center, paper, $19 (9786188618534). 294.3.


MEDITATION
Liberation or Attachment?
Exploring the Two Facets of Meditation

In this excellent book, a Buddhist monk of Greek origin has compiled the historic writings of Buddha Gotama, which he uses to explain the how and why of meditation. He starts with simpler serenity meditations on breathing, compassion, and the four elements, before moving through more intense insight meditations and to vipassanā, an insight meditation that is the direct path to Nibbāna (aka Nirvanā). While there are plentiful books on meditation, this one stands out for its precision and thoroughness. For example, for beginners, the author pinpoints the exact spot on the face to feel their breath, how far into the nostrils to follow the breath, and specific ways to count in-breaths and out-breaths. The author details every moment along the way to the eighth level of meditative absorption to bring readers to the purity of Satipatthāna, the method of self-liberation. For serious seekers determined to reach enlightenment, this book is overflowing with valuable advice.

Continued from p.49

SF/Fantasy & Horror

The Albino's Secret.

By Michael Moorcock and Mark Hodder.

Oct. 2025. 416p. Saga, paper, $20 (9781668067802); e-book (9781668067826).

Investigators Sir Seaton Begg and Doctor "Taffy" Sinclair have arrived in Istanbul, somewhat delayed by an encounter with Nazis in Munich. The British Temporal Agency has sent them to hunt down the mysterious assassin known as the Red King. When they rescue old friend/enemy Violet Damm from an agent of the Red King, Suleyman the Strangler, they are thrown headfirst into a web of secrets. Their section chief, Sir Vivian Clark, tells them that a key operative has gone rogue and disappeared. Investigating nearly gets them blown up—but reveals there is far more to the situation than a simple defection. Begg and Sinclair will find an ally where they least expect one in albino former thief Zenith and discover layers of betrayal and dastardly plots before they finally succeed in unmasking the Red King. From Istanbul they'll chase their enemies across Europe to an epic showdown. Hodder and Moorcock's first in the Metatemporal Detectives series is a rip-roaring, early-twentieth-century adventure contrasting the rapid changes of rising modernity with ancient symbols to great effect. *—Regina Schroeder*

The Amberglow Candy Store.

By Hiyoko Kurisu. Tr. by Matt Treyvaud.

Nov. 2025. 208p. Putnam, $28 (9780593854921); e-book (9780593854938).

Amid proliferating J-healing titles is a subgenre featuring magical locations that can only be found when they're most needed: think *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* or The Full Moon Coffee Shop series. "We don't get many humans here," Amberglow's proprietor Kogetsu explains about Gloaming Lane. "The only beings who come here are spirits, specters, and humans in a precarious and unstable state." Needy (and lucky) customers arrive to find their favorite sweets and leave with a delectable antidote to alleviate personal challenges. Konpeito strengthens a high-school romance. Wasanbon provides a seeming aura of invisibility for an office worker. Monaka allows college friends to share their true feelings. Caramels engender beautiful music in a middle-school brass band. Candy apples encourage restored empathy between exhausted new parents. The closing chapter spotlights Kogetsu's own fascinating backstory as a reluctant friend and recalcitrant confectioner. Gently translated by Japan-domiciled Australian Treyvaud, Kurisu's charmingly approachable, warmly reassuring novel provides quite the satisfyingly toothsome treat. *Amberglow*'s sequel, *The Twilight Post Office in the Night Alley*, will hopefully reach U.S. shores soon. *—Terry Hong*

YA: *Teens will relate to the young struggling customers who discover soothing delights in Kogetsu's welcoming sweet shop. TH.*

As Many Souls as Stars.

By Natasha Siegel.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Morrow, $30 (9780063418028); e-book (9780063418042).

A demon created from the shadows. A witch with a soul as bright as the sun. Both destined to destroy each other. But which is more powerful—the dark or the light? Miriam Richter is a centuries-old demon who survives on the souls she consumes through trading with naive humans. All souls seem the same until she encounters one that shines brighter than all the rest, and Miriam must have it. However, a soul can only be given willingly, and this one belongs to Cybil Harding, a First Born Daughter who is cursed to bring disaster to everyone around her. With no way to break the curse, Cybil tries to fight her powers rather than submit to the darkness. When Miriam arrives with a deal to break the curse, Cybil declines, resigned to her fate. But tragedy throws Cybil into Miriam's arms, resulting in a deal neither can refuse. Siegel's latest (after *The Phoenix Bride*, 2024) is a seductive and sultry work that crosses centuries, weaving lust, love, and hate into a compelling tale about womanhood that will leave readers dizzy with satisfaction. *—LynnDee Wathen*

The Burning Queen.

By Aparna Verma.

Nov. 2025. 416p. Orbit, paper, $19.99 (9780316523028); e-book (9780316523158).

After the events of *The Phoenix King* (2021), Elena, the exiled queen of Ravence, is mourning the loss of one love interest, Yassen, while teaming up in a love/hate relationship with the other, Samson, the would-be leader of Seshar. Elena and Samson are working to liberate their countries from the imperialistic Jantari, wielding their different fire magics as compatible weapons while also mutually rebelling against the other's domineering approach. Meanwhile, the Arohassin, the group that had planned Elena's assassination, returns, albeit this time as allies, with gamemaster Jaya wielding remote-controlled electronic spiders. Their support encourages Samson to attack Jantari-owned mines, while Elena reaches out to the Yumi for assistance. Elena and Samson each deceive the other while traversing through webs of political intrigue, all while contending with unexpected betrayals from allies with their own agendas, and Elena's surprise attendance at the council of the Second Continent appears to be an unmitigated disaster for all parties except the Jantari. Verma has masterfully built out her world while setting up an exciting conclusion to the various intertwined plots in the forthcoming final book in the Ravence trilogy. *—Frances Moritz*

The Changeling Queen.

By Kimberly Bea.

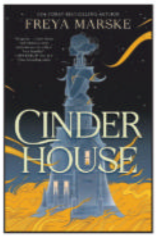
Oct. 2025. 448p. Kensington/Erewhon, $32 (9781645661733); e-book (9781645661757).

Putting a fresh new spin on a Scottish ballad, Bea's debut tells the story of a woman who must give up her one true love if she's to become who she's truly meant to be. Bess Grieve has always known she was different from the people around her—how different she is, though, she is afraid to confront. But her love, Thomas, doesn't seem to care. All Bess wants is to be his wood nymph and he her shepherd king. But a trickster fae and the whispers in the forest keep telling Bess she's meant to be more than a village cunning woman. When tragedy takes Thomas away, Bess must confront her fears and embrace her true identity. Bea's enchanting fantasy weaves a story of love, grief, heartbreak, and finding out who one can become in a world telling them who they should be. *The Changeling Queen* is full of captivating storytelling, a complex protagonist, and atmospheric world building; fantasy and folklore readers will want to pick this one up. *—LynnDee Wathen*

Cinder House.

By Freya Marske.

Oct. 2025. 144p. Tor.com, $24.99 (9781250341716); e-book (9781250341723).



In this outstanding, gothic "Cinderella" retelling from the Hugo-nominated author of the Last Binding trilogy, Ella has been dead for six years when the crown prince invites every unattached young woman in the kingdom to a series of balls at which he will select a bride. As a ghost tethered to her house and forced to obey the malicious whims of the stepfamily responsible for her death, Ella is invisible to all humans outside her household. Her only friends are Quaint, a charm-selling fairy who owns a stall at the market, and the renowned foreign scholar of hauntings whom Ella secretly corresponds with and who has no idea that Ella is herself a ghost. When Ella barters with Quaint for a pair of shoes that will grant her the ability to take corporeal form for the three nights of the balls, she only wants to bask in a few nights of feeling alive again, but a chance encounter with the prince changes everything. This novella impresses from its chilling opening to its inspired, polyamorous take on happily ever after. Lovers of fairy-tale retellings, gothic fantasy, and fierce queer joy will be enchanted. *—Elena Gleason*

Crossroads of Ravens.

By Andrzej Sapkowski.

Oct. 2025. 400p. Orbit, $30 (9780316597739); e-book (9780316597753).

A young witcher named Geralt, recently departed from training at Kaer Mordhen, stands accused of murder. He is rescued by a witcher of some local reputation, Preston

Holt, who rides with him for a while—including a detour to a mine beset by monsters, where Geralt successfully fends off the creatures—and then, at a crossroads, offers Geralt a partnership: trade on Holt's reputation to get jobs but execute them with the benefits of Geralt's youthful vigor. Holt, of course, has his own motives, and it isn't long before Geralt learns that he's hiding something. The training Holt can offer is worth quite a bit, though, and Geralt learns how to effectively hunt monsters reasonably quickly, bringing in plenty of payments. Fortunately for the story, Holt's secrets come out, and Geralt finds himself embroiled in events with more human monsters—and faced with ethical quandaries and difficult tasks that will determine the course of his life. Fans of the Witcher series (as well as the Netflix adaptation) will enjoy the opportunity to experience Geralt's earlier days, and the stand-alone story will welcome new readers. —*Regina Schroeder*

> **YA:** *Teen fantasy readers—even those with no experience with the Witcher series—will enjoy the exploits of young Geralt. RS.*

Dark Sisters.

By Kristi DeMeester.

Dec. 2025. 336p. St. Martin's, $29 (9781250286819).

The residents of Hawthorne Springs, a town somewhere below the Mason-Dixon line where everyone is a member of a megachurch called The Path, have seen unprecedented and ubiquitous prosperity since the late 1700s, except for a strange illness that indiscriminately and seriously sickens the women. Even more troubling, that sickness seems to be tied to those who have reported seeing the "dark sisters," two grotesque female spirits tied together by their braids, living in a large tree on the outskirts of town. The time line alternates in order between Anne in 1750, Camilla in 2007, and finally Mary in 1953, each enhancing the others, keeping readers turning the pages as everything comes together like a jigsaw puzzle, albeit one with a nightmarish final piece. A deadly serious, witchy story propelled by rage against the extraordinary and everyday violence men perpetrate against women, *Dark Sisters* reaches out across the centuries with a terror that is all too timely. For fans of anything by Rachel Harrison and Gwendolyn Kiste as well as *The Year of the Witching* (2020), by Alexis Henderson. —*Becky Spratford*

The Door on the Sea.

By Caskey Russell.

Oct. 2025. 400p. Solaris, $26.99 (9781837863785); e-book (9781837863839).

The traditions and cosmology of the Tlingit people of the Pacific Northwest shine in this sweeping fantasy quest that feels both timeless and utterly fresh. Elān is a young man in training to be a teacher, thoughtful and unassuming yet chosen for a task that will shape his destiny. His grandfather was a famous warrior, and this legacy is one of the reasons why the elder Íxt entrusts Elān to lead an expedition to locate the Quest Object, a mission as dangerous as it is transformative. Alongside a diverse crew, Elān braves shifting seas, mysterious islands, and relentless enemies while grappling with questions of courage, belonging, and identity. The Koosh, shape-shifting invaders, threaten everything he holds dear, while a wise and witty talking raven offers both humor and guidance. Richly drawn landscapes and lyrical prose root this tale in Indigenous oral tradition, giving readers an immersive sense of myth and place. This exhilarating adventure blends the grandeur of epic fantasy with the intimacy of character-driven storytelling, opening the door to a world readers will be eager to return to. —*Brittney Cray*

The Finest Edge of Twilight.

By R. A. Salvatore.

Oct. 2025. 400p. Random House Worlds, $30 (9780593875261); e-book (9780593875278).

Breezy Do'Urden, daughter of Drizzt and Catti-brie, is young, impulsive, and unfocused as she challenges a friend at the Monastery of the Yellow Rose for the rank of Master of Dragons. Her disappointment when she loses is exacerbated by being expelled from the monastery. Having manipulated the situation to cause her loss and expulsion, family friend Jarlaxle arranges for Breezy's advanced training, first with the Lady Avelyere in the Way of Shadow and then with the young aevendrow wizard Allefaero, to practice combat spells and learn the ancient art of bladesinging. Underestimated at every turn by everyone except Jarlaxle, Breezy leads Allefaero into dangerous situations to achieve her desired title of Shadowdancer of Bladesinging. On a brief respite from her grandfather's punishment for endangering the city of Gauntlgrym with her antics, she faces off against Drizzt's former friend, now a vampire, and reaches a realization that her morality does not have to echo Jarlaxle's. Breezy's coming-of-age story is an opportunity to expose Salvatore's extensive world building and detailed fight scenes to the next generation of readers. —*Frances Moritz*

> **YA:** *The coming-of-age story of the daughter of one of Salvatore's most beloved characters is the perfect intro to his work for teen readers. FM.*

The Ganymedan.

By R. T. Ester.

Nov. 2025. 432p. Solaris, paper, $16.99 (9781837863365); e-book (9781837863372).

Archer Lenox-Pilser (aka LP) is a visionary hero to most of the galaxy, though he is the root of all evil to others. LP has lived over four centuries with the help of biological backups and mental transfers. And now he's been assassinated, permanently. V-Dot, a young man with a checkered past, most recently in the Lenox-Pilser family employ, has killed LP to cover a theft. With his identity obscured temporarily, V-Dot has to get off Mars and away from the authorities so he can get what he stole into the hands of someone who can expose LP for the monster he was, especially regarding his treatment of those sentenced to the virtual environment known as the Island. Fans of a far-flung, cyberpunk future of sentient spaceships and machines and beings of varying degrees of consciousness will enjoy Ester's debut, as V-Dot escapes across the frontier and has adventures aboard well-known spacer vessel TR-8901. —*Terrence Miltner*

The Graceview Patient.

By Caitlin Starling.

Oct. 2025. 304p. St. Martin's, $29 (9781250340757); e-book (9781250340764).

Owing to a rare autoimmune disease, Margaret "Meg" Culpepper had been unable to work regularly when she received an offer to participate in a paid medical trial. Over the course of a long hospital stay, her immune system would be eradicated and built back up. The possibility of restored health is irresistible, but once she checks in, she's afraid she made the wrong choice. The medication causes her to hallucinate and lose time. Large portions of her medical records are redacted, she doesn't know whom to trust, and she senses a sinister presence in the hospital. But is it real? Readers may wonder if the detailed documenting of Meg's infusions and procedures is perhaps unnecessary, but the repetition will produce the same effect on them that it does on Meg: uncertainty about what treatments she's undergoing and how much of their memory they can trust. Meg's increasing paranoia and unreliable narration contribute to a creeping, claustrophobic terror that will appeal to readers who enjoyed Victor LaValle's *The Devil in Silver* (2012), S.L. Grey's *The Ward* (2012), or Matt Shaw's *Immortal Shadows* (2021). —*Stephanie Klose*

The Great Work.

By Sheldon Costa.

Nov. 2025. 336p. Quirk, paper, $18.99 (9781683695059); e-book (9781683695066).

A grieving man and a runaway teenage boy hunt a mythical beast across the frontier in Costa's brutal and beautiful speculative Western set in the nineteenth-century Olympic Peninsula. After his best friend of 20 years drowns in what the sheriff deems a suicide, Gentle is determined to finish Liam's quest: killing the monster he was tracking when he died. Sightings of the so-called Dragon of Dalton Lake have been rampant in their frontier town; those who have seen the giant salamander suffer vivid hallucinations and go mad. Liam, an alchemist, believed the salamander's blood was an ingredient in the Great Work (the philosopher's stone), and Gentle hopes he'll be able to resurrect Liam with it. He's joined by his nephew, on the run from his cruel father, and others they meet seeking the salamander to either kill or worship. Costa's genre-defying debut novel is a philosophical page-turner about the end of the American frontier, the horrors of war, the greedy destruction of pristine wilderness, and the human connections that give hope and meaning to it all. Not to be missed. —*Krista Hutley*

Heart of Night and Fire.

By Nisha J. Tuli.

Nov. 2025. 368p. Forever, paper, $17.99 (9781538772249).

Travel to a world where magic is free to be whatever one desires. Zarya finally escapes from a gilded existence where her magic is forbidden to use. Once in the city of Dharati, she discovers a whole new world with help from magic-weaving Aazheri sorcerers and blood-drinking rakshasa. However, dark creatures have been attacking the city since she arrived. She's also entranced by a dark and handsome stranger, Rabin, who knows about her past and the secrets she keeps. In this first installment of an originally indie-published quartet, Zarya will have to make difficult decisions to discover who and what she is, all while fighting a growing attraction to Rabin. Readers will be thrilled to meet intriguing creatures that hint at Indian cultures and legends. Zuli's (*Not Safe for Work*, 2025) riveting story, full of secrets and wonder, will feel like it grants wishes and take readers on a magical and romantic ride. —*Bre Weeks*

I'll Make a Spectacle of You.

By Beatrice Winifred Iker.

Nov. 2025. 416p. Run for It, paper, $19.99 (9780316575249); e-book (9780316575256).

Bricksbury University has several things that might entice prospective students: It is the oldest HBCU in the nation, it has an active conjure community, and its forest is home to a beast that stalks the campus. Riding the high of a successful conference presentation, Zora Robinson is eager to start her first semester in her graduate Appalachian Studies program. Beginning a study of spiritualism in Affrilachia, Zora is guided by her thesis advisor to examine the community she is a part of more closely. Prompted by the handwritten journal of one of the university's former librarians, who disappeared under mysterious circumstances, Zora begins to unearth the haunted past of the university and its founders and starts to wonder if the beast is the only thing she should fear at Bricksbury. Iker's debut is a strong southern gothic that deftly entwines Appalachian folklore with the nuance of Black identities in the south to create a compelling dark-academia tale. Readers of Alexis Henderson, Rivers Solomon, and P. Djèlí Clark should keep an eye on this and Iker's future publications. —*Raychel Bennet*

I'll Quit When I'm Dead.

By Luke Smitherd.

Oct. 2025. Little, Brown/Mulholland, $29 (9780316579568); e-book (9780316579582).

Musician Johnny Blake needs a reset. After he's injured in a disastrous performance that yields an addiction to pain killers, he moves into a friend's rental in the countryside, hoping it will give him the chance to recalibrate. Madison Bailey is reeling from a nasty breakup that results in directionless drifting until she learns of a program called No Days Off that promises to give back the spark and zest for life that she sorely lacks—as long as she's willing to seriously push beyond her limits. Madison embraces the new structure the program offers even as doubts creep in (it doesn't take long for her to determine nothing is at it seems and everyone is hiding something); as for Johnny, he quickly discovers he's not alone in his new digs and must fight the monsters hiding in the shadows. Both Madison and Johnny find strengths deep within as they face the demons that put them in their situations, and readers won't want to put this page-turning horror novel down but will keep reading to see how both characters triumph over impossible odds. —*Carrie Rasak*

The Merge.

By Grace Walker.

Nov. 2025. 320p. Mariner, $28 (9780063446731); e-book (9780063446755).

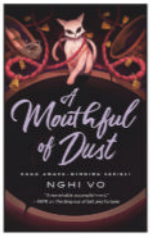
In a dystopian near-future where overpopulation and climate change wreak havoc on Earth, a company called Combine offers a unique solution: merging two consciousnesses into a single body. Amelia Anderson and her mother Laurie are candidates for The Merge. Amelia hopes that merging with her mother will stave off Laurie's quickly progressing Alzheimer's and allow them to continue to live together as one person. Told through alternating points of view between Laurie and Amelia as they progress through the preparation period with a group of other participants, Walker shows how the two slowly come to realize that becoming one consciousness is not the euphoric and happy continuation of life that they'd hoped for. The tension builds slowly as Amelia and Laurie realize that Combine's leadership may be hiding the true intentions of their solution to relieve the burgeoning population and strain on resources. Eco-fiction adjacent, Walker's debut creates a thought-provoking narrative that focuses on the emotional consequences of societal cleansing, social engineering, and the lengths people will go to in order to save their families. —*Craig Clark*

★ A Mouthful of Dust.

By Nghi Vo.

Oct. 2025. 96p. Tor.com, $24.99 (9781250386403); e-book (9781250388285).

In the next volume in Vo's Singing Hills cycle (following *The Brides of High Hill,* 2024), cleric Chih is on their way into a region famous for two things: the horrendous famine that hit back in the day, and the delicious pork. Chih quickly gets into hot water as people are reluctant to let them hear the true stories of the traumatic turns and interpersonal horrors that the famine caused. But accompanied by their neixin, Almost Brilliant, and a small, white kitten they found on the road, Chih pursues their vocation and attempts to dig out all the stories they can—true, false, and whatever comes in between. The Singing Hills cycle has been a marvelous way for Vo to showcase her rich myth building and storytelling; each volume is rooted in the same familiar protagonist while also exploring entirely new, fresh legends, histories, and settings. This novella is particularly successful, telling a dark, suspenseful story full of dread, where Chih and the reader both want to know and don't want to know the full truth, and where the wings of famine and its ghosts haunt dark corridors and too-full graveyards. A shivery, dark addition to a superb series. —*Leah von Essen*



The Night Is Not for You.

By Eman Quotah.

Oct. 2025. 352p. Run for It, paper, $18.99 (9780316595810); e-book (9780316595827).

A man's violent murder has a haunting ripple effect on a tight-knit community at the center of award-winning novelist Quotah's (*Bride of the Sea*. 2021) first foray into horror. In an unnamed small town, seven-year-old Layla dreams of independence and a pet donkey that will take her away from home. But when a man's body is found behind a corner store, accompanied by the lingering smell of perfume and a cryptic message written in lipstick, suspicions grow, and every woman in town becomes a suspect. As the years pass and the murder toll rises, rumors spread of hoofprints at the crime scenes and sightings of a woman with hair like silk, and Layla's world becomes even smaller as her community is sent into a panic and she grows up in the shadow of a serial killer. Quotah's evocative blend of psychological horror and coming-of-age fiction draws from Emirati folklore and the legend of the vengeful jinn Umm Al Duwais to explore the consequences of patriarchal oppression, leaving readers to ponder its weighty themes long after they have turned the final page. —*Kaitlin Conner*

No Man's Land.

By Richard K. Morgan.

Oct. 2025. 496p. Del Rey, $30 (9780345493156); e-book (9798217095094).

Duncan Silver is a woodsman, well versed in navigating the fae-infested forest that has overtaken parts of Great Britain after WWI. An ancient fae race called the Huldu kidnap human children, and Silver must use his military expertise and guile to rescue them from their merciless captors. During one excursion, though, Silver discovers deeper and more unsettling machinations that require him to delve into secrets of his own past. Along with a band of eccentric, lewd, and sometimes indecent cohorts, Silver battles and maneuvers his way through an unsettling new kind of war with a supernatural enemy that threatens the future of humanity. Using post-WWI Scottish and British vernacular, extensive research into weaponry, and historical references accurate to the period, Morgan immerses readers in a prurient and supremely entertaining world. Whether it's reluctant fantasy heroes (Land Fit for Heroes trilogy) or brooding killing machines like Hakan Veil in *Thin Air* (2018), Morgan excels at creating dark, conflicted characters and immersive and atmospheric settings that drip with menace and harm. —*Craig Clark*

On Submission.

By Michael J. Seidlinger.

Oct. 2025. 264p. CLASH, paper, $18.95 (9781960988812).

Agent to horror king J. D. Church, Henry Richmond Pendle is cutthroat and ruthless but is tolerated because he can uplift the careers of authors and editors alike. When aspiring author Alex Moyer queries Pendle about representation, he receives a quick rejection. This routine exchange turns into a nightmare as Moyer's attempts to get Pendle's attention become irrational and intense. Seidlinger (*The Body Harvest*, 2024) switches perspective between author and agent, predator and prey. Pendle turns more anxious, paranoid, frantic, and unhinged as the novel proceeds, taking the reader with him. The novel is a fast-paced, pointed critique of publishing's focus on financial success versus artistic merit and also a slasher with enough gruesome details to please casual fans of the subgenre. This unsettling title could be recommended to readers who enjoy dark and grisly stories about authors and obsession, like Travis Thrasher's *Ghostwriter* (2009) or Stephen King's *Misery*, as well as readers curious about extreme horror and looking for an entry point before trying out authors like Wrath James White. —*Lila Denning*

Our Vicious Oaths.

By N. E. Davenport.

Oct. 2025. 528p. Harper Voyager, paper, $19.99 (9780063397781); e-book (9780063397798).

Kadeesha is a fae princess who prefers riding her flying serpent and owning small businesses to other royal pursuits. Malachi is a fae prince looking for revenge who never wanted to settle down with a queen. But they are both beholden to royal duties. When Malachi crashes Kadeesha's wedding to an evil king and whisks her away to his homeland as a hostage, they form a tenuous pact that serves both of them, for now. But will it hold? And will they be able to handle their undeniable sexual chemistry? Davenport's passionate romantasy (after *The Blood Gift*, 2023) has epic battles, courtly scheming, and constantly shifting alliances, with plenty of magic shadows and flames to tie everything together. Justice is meted out with violently extreme prejudice. While readers will quickly determine that the protagonists are meant for each other, Kadeesha and Malachi follow a unique path. In this case, the journey is the destination. Recommended for fans of sexy romantasies by authors like Abigail Owen, Rebecca Yarros, Sarah J. Maas, and Analeigh Sbrana. —*Ashley Rayner*

Outlaw Planet.

By M. R. Carey.

Nov. 2025. 496p. Orbit, paper, $19.99 (9780316595469); e-book (9780316595483).

This is the story of Dog-Bitch Bess and her gun, Wakeful Slim. It's the story of the man for whom the gun is named. He was a Pandominion soldier a thousand years before her time, on a mission she will complete. She first saw the gun shoot a bolt of lightning at a fellow traveler when she was beginning a new life and took the gun when that life burned to the ground. She became friends with the gun and fought a war with it. She became an infamous outlaw after her side lost, even though she wanted nothing but to be left alone. She made friends she wasn't looking for and learned the history of the man who owned Wakeful Slim, a testament to a hundred generations of devotion. This is a story that readers will start to read more slowly as it gets near the conclusion because they won't want it to end. Carey has written other books on the Pandominion where animals are anthropomorphized (*Infinity Gate*, 2023), but this one blends sf and Western like no other. —*Don Vicha*

Petty Lies.

By Sulmi Bak. Tr. by Sarah Lyo.

Nov. 2025. 160p. Little, Brown/Mulholland, paper, $17.99 (9780316594486); e-book (9780316594509).

"The people who inflicted harm on . . . children and animals were the most wicked among the wicked," a husband opined to his wife before his untimely (suspicious) death. The destruction of children and dogs—the latter graphically and tortuously—drives Bak's horrifying debut, unflinchingly translated by Lyo and populated by three unreliable voices engendering terrifying outcomes in intricately overlapping epistolary reveals. Student Mira opens, announcing "I am a bad tutor," explaining how she manipulated herself into the home of a widow with two sons. That widow, Jiwon, declares "I am a bad mother," exposing her younger son as even more monstrous than Mira could have imagined. Yujae, however, insists, "I am a good son," desperate to divert some of his mother's loving attention away from "perfect son" Yuchan even as he unabashedly confesses to heinous inhumanity. Intentions, results, and consequences don't always align in Bak's entangled narrative. "The way I see it, there's nothing easier than deceiving other people," Yujae intones. An appallingly propulsive, can't-turn-away-from nightmare awaits. Warnings of shockingly intense violence should preface all potential recommendations. —*Terry Hong*

Queen Demon.

By Martha Wells.

Oct. 2025. 400p. Tor, $28.99 (9781250826916); e-book (9781250826923).

Witch King (2023) introduced readers to Kai and his crew of disgruntled witches and other assorted enemies of the former Hierarchs. Wells continues their story here, recounting how scholar Dahin has a theory that means they need to go to the archaeological site of the Hierarchs' origin, and quickly. Meanwhile, an accompanying time line from the past tells a story of Bashara and Kai and their journeys together in the older war, before the events of the first novel. New threats rise up to bring the old world's violence and pain coming back to the fore as Wells sets up for a series climax. Readers will benefit from having learned the breadth of world and character details in the first volume and, without the need to study here, will blaze more easily through the action and politics. The past story line begins to feel auxiliary to the primary one but does include good character development. Fans of character-rooted high fantasy will enjoy this series led by a demon with a surprisingly soft heart. —*Leah von Essen*

Sacred Space Between.

By Kalie Reid.

Nov. 2025. 432p. Little, Brown, paper, $19.99 (9780316596138); e-book (9780316596152).

In a place where magic is used to control and censor, Jude, a self-exiled saint, craves a normal life away from the Abbey's oppressive ways. However, his growing magic, which has remained hidden for so long, is now being sought by those who want power and control by any means. Maeve, an iconographer, dedicates her livelihood to her art. Now, she's been commissioned to "paint" Jude in a new light, much to the Abbey's delight. Jude knows that he must somehow get rid of this iconographer, but comes to see that she possesses the same magic he has. This could be his chance to expose the leaders of the Abbey for who they are. However, as the two of them get closer, the choice becomes more difficult to face. Told from the perspective of one who witnessed it all, Reid's debut showcases gothic elements and elements of romantasy mixed with the level of detail of Ken Follett's Kingsbridge series, in which the beauty of magic and art come together between two outcasts struggling against a controlling entity. —*Bre Weeks*

The Sky of Sacrifice.

By Rosalia Aguilar Solace.

Nov. 2025. 488p. Blackstone, $28.99 (9798212537926).

Nu, Maïa, and the other Sages are excited for the selection of the new Sage of Hope after defeating Suttaru (in *The Great Library of Tomorrow*, 2024). Watching from the Great Library, they go from excitement to dread as one of the Unwritten suddenly appears. Using one of the Library's portals, Nu and Maïa travel to the beach, but they are too late: The Unwritten has murdered the new Sage. Capturing the Unwritten, they are shocked to hear the voice of the Rogue Sage, Edwin Payne, come out, promising more death and the destruction of the Great Library. Faced with their enemy again, the Sages divide and attempt to conquer. Nu and Robin, for example, search for a piece of the Maksus Stone and the man rumored to possess it. But as the Sages go about their quests, Payne sets out to resurrect Suttaru. Book two of the Book of Wisdom trilogy has lots of action and explores both new and familiar areas of Paperworld. Readers who enjoyed book one will welcome a return to the world of the Great Library. *—Lynnanne Pearson*

The Sofa.

By Sam Munson.

Nov. 2025. 162p. Two Dollar Radio, paper, $17.95 (9781953387974); e-book (9781953387967).

The slow-motion collapse of a family's idyllic life begins with the replacement of a seminal piece of furniture. Mr. Montessori and his family return from a day at the beach to discover that someone has replaced their old couch with an off-putting, garishly upholstered sofa that smells faintly damp. As the police investigate this incident and the sofa integrates itself into the Montessori family's lives, Mr. Montessori finds that unsettling events begin happening to him, from disconcerting, fleeting glimpses of a nebulous something in mirrors to a mind-bending walk in a forest. What begins as an odd occurrence signals the start of this seemingly loving father losing his grip on reality. Ideally meant to be read in one sitting, Munson's (*Dog Symphony*, 2018) disturbingly dark ride of a novella starts off as rather ordinary, even bland, but slowly and surely ratchets up readers' mental discomfort until the book's jarring conclusion. The pacing recalls well-told psychological horror, while its surrealism is perfect for fans of Franz Kafka and Harumi Murakami. *—James Gardner*

Something Wicked.

By Falon Ballard.

Dec. 2025. 384p. Putnam, $32 (9780593854679); e-book (9780593854686).

An uprising has rocked Avon, upending the nation with a daunting demand: The current rulers will be replaced by whoever can kill them first. Callum, the prince of Scota, faces crushing pressure from his father and family to take on this gruesome task. Meanwhile, courtesan Cate has been using her magical gifts for good, healing the emotional pain of clients through intimate relations. But now, she's being forced to seduce Callum to clear the path for others to claim his presumed throne. Their immediate attraction is undeniable, yet both are cautious as they enter a sizzling agreement, each hiding secrets that could unravel everything. The publisher bills *Something Wicked* as *Macbeth* meets *Moulin Rouge!*, and the book delivers some seriously spicy moments that weave together those stories' themes (if slightly awkwardly). As the first book in contemporary-romance author Ballard's Idle Reputations romantasy series, it paves a path with its world building and political intrigue so that future books should be able to dive headfirst into the steamy elements and focus less on explaining political machinations. *—Margaret Howard*

Spellbound.

By Georgia Leighton.

Oct. 2025. 432p. Grand Central, $30 (9781538771655); e-book (9781538771679).

Leighton's adult debut has all the expected elements of "Sleeping Beauty": the giving of multiple magical gifts, including an affinity for animals; the sudden appearance of an evil witch who places a curse on the newborn; the secreting away of the child until her seventeenth birthday; the freezing of everyone in the castle at the time of the christening; and even a spinning wheel. But they are blended in a unique manner, presenting a wholly different take on the tale. The story is told in alternating chapters from the perspectives of three distinct individuals: Sel, an apprentice master magician; Meredyth, the queen's fiercely loyal lady-in-waiting; amd Violanna, the queen herself. The different viewpoints expand the story, filling in blanks missing from the original and offering unexpected insights. They examine not only the desperate scheme hatched to save the child but also the background of each character, the politics of ruling a kingdom, and what it means to be a caretaker as opposed to a mother. Fairy-tale-retelling fans will be handsomely rewarded. *—Lucy Lockley*

YA: *Teens will appreciate the adolescent princess' story and intriguing spin on the familiar fairy tale. LL.*

This Gilded Abyss.

By Rebecca Thorne.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Tor, paper, $19.99 (9781250422125); e-book (9781250422132).

Nix is a sergeant with a troubled past and an excellent record of keeping those under her command alive. One of her ghosts resurfaces in the form of Kessandra, an aristocratic "people's princess" and Nix's ex-lover. Despite the anger, tension, and guilt running between them, Kess needs Nix's help to solve the mystery behind a horrific disease causing its victims to violently attack everyone around them. Unfortunately, the clues can only be found on a deep-sea vessel traveling to a domed underwater city. Dangers multiply in this fragile, confined environment, but so too do the sparks between lady and bodyguard. Having a lot in common with horror movies like *Underwater* or *Leviathan*, *This Gilded Abyss* departs from the cozy style that readers of Thorne's Tomes & Tea series may expect. However, fans of shows like *Arcane* will love the magic-tech setting and the relationship between Nix and Kess, while players of the video game series Bioshock will have many predictions about the industrious, luxurious undersea city of Fall. A complicated, sapphic romance as well as a tale of horrors unleashed by corruption, greed, and hubris. *—Sarah Rice*

An Unlikely Coven.

By AM Kvita.

Oct. 2025. 400p. Orbit, paper, $19.99 (9780316586634); e-book (9780316586641).

Joan Greenwood is a witch from the most powerful witch family in New York. Not that her family name does her any good: she is unable to cast magic, and she vehemently disagrees with how her aunt and her father govern. When a spell is created that gives a human the powers of a witch, the fight to find that human and the witch that created the spell becomes a priority not only for the Greenwoods of New York but for other witch families, mainly the rigid and strict Wardell family of California. Joan's mission is to keep Mik, the amazing nonbinary human infested with magic, safe from being discovered, so she partners with her vampire best friend, an up-and-coming witch, and other charming characters to protect Mik and keep the political families at bay. Personalities clash, feelings are felt, and great magic is discovered. Kvita, in their debut, has written a wonderfully charming start to a new series for readers of funny fantasy with rich world building. *—Emily Borsa*

The Villa, Once Beloved.

By Victor Manibo.

Nov. 2025. 400p. Kensington/Erewhon, $28 (9781645661382).

The patriarch of the Sepulveda family is dead, but as readers learn, it is not from natural causes. As the family makes their way to the coconut plantation above an isolated village where their grand, Spanish-colonial manor home sits, a typhoon is raging. Soon, a landslide traps them all. Readers enter this atmospheric, immersive, slow-burn Filipino gothic through the eyes of Sophie, a Filipino American adopted by white parents, attending the funeral with her boyfriend, the oldest Sepulveda grandchild. Amidst jet lag and an unfamiliar culture, Sophie learns that the "bad luck" tied to the family is grounded in a very real curse, one for which the various family members hold a collective responsibility. No longer beloved, the Sepulvedas all must face the consequences of their evil political and personal choices. Another great example of how voices from all over the world are injecting a centuries-old trope with their culture, history, and folk horror, both honoring and refreshing the gothic genre itself while giving readers a slew of new, terrifying tales to enjoy. *—Becky Spratford*

Violet Thistlewaite Is Not a Villain Anymore.

By Emily Krempholtz.

Nov. 2025. 368p. Ace, paper, $19 (9780593954300); e-book (9780593954317).

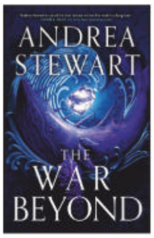
Dragon's Rest, a cozy town with mythical inhabitants, is the perfect place for Violet Thistlewaite, a powerful Thornwitch, to make a fresh start. After years of working alongside a dark sorcerer, all Violet wants is to be "good." She wants to settle down and make a name for herself that isn't feared. With her flower shop and enchantments drawing people to her new hometown, she starts to see a way forward despite a thorn in her side, her grumpy but handsome neighbor, alchemist Nathaniel. When a dark shadow from Violet's past comes through, it will be up to Violet and Nathaniel to work together to make sure their second chances are not completely lost. However, secrets may derail their success. Can a villain who wants to be good have a happily ever after? This debut title is a solid fit for fans of Travis Baldree's *Legends & Lattes* (2022) or Amanda Flower's Magic Bookshop mystery series as well as for those who grew up with Disney's *The Descendants*. If anyone deserves a redemptive arc, it's Violet. Cozy and whimsical, this is an fun dive into a fantasy world. *—Bre Weeks*

The War Beyond.

By Andrea Stewart.

Nov. 2025. 448p. Orbit, $30 (9780316564830); e-book (9780316564854).

The Hollow Covenant series continues what *The Gods Below* (2024) started: an epic fantasy of terrifying gods and character-driven rebellion. In this sequel, sisters Hakara and Rasha are both smarting after their painful reunion. Hakara has a corestone in her gut, a magical gem of the gods that is changing her from within as she tries to lead the Unanointed forward. Rasha is trying to stay alive even as she begins to doubt whether the all-powerful Kluehnn can be trusted. Meanwhile, Mull tries to escape from underground to figure out once and for all what happened to the man who made a pact with the gods, one that changed their world, and Sheuan has to find out who the Sovereign really is if she wants to survive. As with many second volumes in a three-book series, this one has a bit less action and a lot more revelation and politicking. Still, readers will be fully invested in the characters discovering these secrets and how they can help the Unanointed claw back a Restored world without submitting to Kluehnn's greed for supremacy. Once again, Stewart delivers a vivid, complex fantasy reminiscent of N.K. Jemisin's Inheritance trilogy. Readers will be eager for the trilogy's conclusion. *—Leah von Essen*

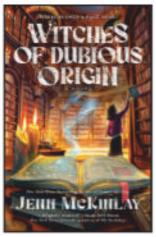


Witches of Dubious Origin.

By Jenn McKinlay.

Oct. 2025. 384p. Ace, paper, $19 (9780593819753); e-book (9780593819760).

More than 20 years ago, Zoe Ziakas promised her mother she would never dabble in magic again. Now Zoe, a reference librarian at the Wessex Public Library, may have to break that promise when she receives a mysterious black book in the mail. After taking the book to the Museum of Literature in New York City and meeting with the staff of the museum's Books of Dubious Origin department, Zoe learns she has a magical, maternal family connection with the book. However, to unlock the secrets of her little black book, Zoe must face some secrets of her own that she hoped would remain forever buried in the past. After proving her literary skills in the mystery and romance genres, McKinlay (*A Merry Little Murder Plot*, 2024) now embraces fantasy with the charming first installment in a promising new series. Deftly matching an ingeniously inventive plot with an engagingly quirky cast of characters, including an adorable bookish feline, and adding a hint of flirtatious romance as well as her signature snappy wit, McKinlay casts a spell readers will find impossible to resist. *—John Charles*



The Witching Moon Manor.

By Stacy Sivinski.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Atria, paper, $19 (9781668058411); e-book (9781668058428).

The Quigley sisters are keeping secrets again. Beatrix is suffering from major writer's block despite her magic being word-weaving. Violet is plagued by nightmares involving her husband Emil. And Anne is struggling under the weight of the responsibility of being the Diviner, who guards the welfare of the witches of Chicago. Plus, there is a larger feeling that something isn't right. And it isn't. The three thought they had figured out a way for Mr. Crowley, a dying necromancer, to be with his beloved nonmagical Philip in death (see *The Crescent Moon Tearoom*, 2024), but it turns out they had torn a hole in the fabric of Fate. To set things right, Anne meets with Vincent, the now-dead Mr. Crowley's grandson, who seems to be hiding secrets behind an overly stern manner. There's also the matter of Mr. Crowley's ring, which may hold the key to saving them all. Sivinski offers a cozy winter gas-lamp fantasy that will delight series fans as she deepens the lore and sets the sisters and their friends on the trail of a magical mystery. *—Susan Maguire*

The Women of Wild Hill.

By Kirsten Miller.

Oct. 2025. 368p. Morrow, $30 (9780063282858); e-book (9780063282872).

There are many witches; one family is destined to produce a trio of witches that will change the world. When Calum Geddes, media billionaire and the reason behind their mother's uncharacteristic death by suicide, dies, Brigid Laguerre and her sister, Phoebe Duncan, are summoned to their ancestral home of Wild Hill. Both of them refuse, but the mother goddess won't take no for an answer. They haven't spoken in decades—not since their mother's death sent them to live on opposite sides of the country with fathers who didn't really want them—which leads to an uncomfortable reunion. The third to arrive is Phoebe's daughter, who doesn't know anything of the family history but is quickly brought up to speed by the ghosts of Wild Hill. If they can mend fences and work together, they'll be able to wreak havoc on the corrupt status quo and possibly change the world. The family dynamics and the global revenge fantasy that is cozy in tone make for a fun diversion of a story in Miller's (*The Change*, 2022) latest. *—Regina Schroeder*

Yeehaw Junction.

By Kayli Scholz.

Nov. 2025. 181p. Moonstruck, paper, $19 (9798988815440).

Welcome to Yeehaw Junction, smack dab in the middle of Florida, where the land is poisoned with DDT. It is June, 1999, and the narrator, Skeet, tells readers, "I'm gonna be a school shooter when I grow up." In a few fateful weeks in one summer, a young girl goes missing, and Skeet's precarious home situation goes from bad to worse; readers will sympathize with Skeet even as he and his "family" make awful choices. Scholz adds depth to the story by revealing things outside of Skeet's limited experience in the form of ephemera (police documents, articles, transcripts, etc.) from before and after 1999. Straddling the line between intensely discomfiting psychological suspense and extreme horror without ever sacrificing the heartbreaking humanity at its core, *Yeehaw Junction* forces readers to confront the terrifying reality of the America that is hiding in plain sight, just off the interstate, on the way to the amusement parks. For fans of the 2017 movie *The Florida Project* and novels by CJ Leede, Eric LaRocca, and Gabino Iglesias. *—Becky Spratford*

You Watched in Silence.

By H. Lee Justine.

Nov. 2025. 398p. Blackstone, $28.99 (9798874899158).

Unease in this gothic thriller first arises not from the severed deer head—that comes later—but from nanny Caitlyn's initial in-person meeting with her new charges. Instead of the bubbly, excited twins she's watched for countless hours online, they're unresponsive and screen-obsessed. It's true that their influencer mother, Bella Greene, has been cancelled because of a botched apology, but Caitlyn forgives her. As the children grow to love Caitlyn and Bella begins to confide in her, it becomes easier to believe that the vandalism she sees is merely red paint and that the faceless blonde ghost is just the result of missed medication. Caitlyn prefers to focus on Hannah, the gorgeous, flirty chef, as long as she can keep her own obsessive nature in check. While readers may intuit Caitlyn's secrets early on, Justine's compulsive prose will keep fans of flowery language glued to the pages as she reveals that social media may be more dangerous than any vengeful spirit. Anyone needing another deceitful nanny after Ruth Ware's *The Turn of the Key* (2019) should run to the shelves for this one. *—Matthew Galloway*

Graphic Novels

Adult

The A Word: A Global History of the Abortion Struggle.

By Elizabeth Casillas. Art by Higinia Garay. Tr. by Karen Simon.

Oct. 2025. 160p. Univ. of Regina, paper, $29.95 (9781779400963). 741.5.

In tackling, even briefly, a world history of abortion, *The A Word* attempts a monumental feat. Readers will learn about abortifacient plants used by historical indigenous and enslaved peoples, Ancient Greek views on interrupting pregnancy, and many ways the Catholic Church has influenced reproductive rights policies. More modern topics are also featured, including sections on countries granting or removing abortion access depending on political affairs of the day. Groups helping women access abortion are highlighted, including the Dutch abortion pirates of Women on Waves and travel agencies specializing in discreet getaways. The narrator in the stylishly crisp art stares out at the reader from behind sunglasses, lending the book a direct but not intimate tone. Two chapters focus specifically on the U.S. and Canada, but examples throughout are worldwide. Perhaps due to the occasionally technical or politically dense topics, the translated prose can feel dry, and the broad scope means some topics, like the intersection of non-Christian religions and abortion, are quite brief. Overall, a thoughtful introduction to a topic which continues to face much stigmatization. —*Sarah Rice*

Adabana v. 1.

By NON. Art by the author. Tr. by Caleb D. Cook.

2025. 200p. Dark Horse Manga, paper, $14.99 (9781506749297). 741.5.

The first volume of this harrowing mystery drama follows the investigation of the murder of a high-school girl, Mako, and her uncle, a ramen shop owner, while Mako's classmate, Mizuki, confesses to the murders. But as Mizuki tells her tale, inconsistencies quickly make her public defenders question her story, and details of exploitation, abuse, and the twisting dynamics of friendship begin to unravel her account. Violent and unflinching in its depiction of the ways teenage girls can be mistreated, *Adabana* is nevertheless darkly beautiful in its depiction of snowy rural Japan. NON captures the shifting moods of characters caught in extremes with delicate strokes. This is a mature manga, evocative of *Twin Peaks*, and includes scenes of attempted sexual assault of a minor and the murder. Recommend this to readers who enjoyed dark tales of characters working through heaviness, such as Waka Hirako's *My Broken Mariko* (2019) and Mokumokuren's *The Summer Hikaru Died* (2021). —*Ashley Hawkins*

Athanasia.

By Daniel Kraus. Art by Dani.

Oct. 2025. 256p. Vault, paper, $29.99 (9781638492818). 741.5.

Athanasia Cemetery is where superheroes from the Dynamic Guild are buried when they die, and Forrest Molson and several generations of her family have been tasked with caring for it. While most of her family sees this responsibility as an honor, recovering addict Forrest only feels contempt for Athanasia and the entire Dynamic Guild. When Forrest comes into contact with a mysterious ooze seeping out of the ground, she gains powers that fuel her rage and addiction, making her dangerous to herself and her loved ones. The setting of Venture City is gritty and, despite the superheroes who remain behind the scenes, feels menacing, even with the majority of the citizens putting their faith in the superheroes' hands. The black-and-white sketch-like art supports the dark tone of the story and acts in direct contrast to the stereotypical stylized nature of standard superhero fare, while Brad Simpson's colors neatly indicate the danger of the goo in its neon-green appearance. Readers who carry a bit of cynicism about the goody-goody nature of superhero comics will appreciate this most. —*Suzanne Temple*

City Hunter Omnibus, v. 1.

By Tsukasa Hojo. Art by the author. Tr. by David Evelyn.

2025. 582p. Abrams/Kana, paper, $26.99 (9781419785931). 741.5.

A cornerstone of Japanese media, Hojo's raunchy action crime series is finally available again in this omnibus edition. In this first volume of the City Hunter series, sharpshooting Ryo Saeba takes on murderers, criminals, and a vast underground syndicate—almost always at the behest of a beautiful woman whom he can't quite keep his hands off of. A roller coaster between oddball comedy and hard-nosed crime drama, with all the nudity, violence, and sexual content you might expect, *City Hunter* is defined by the coolness that oozes from the totally '80s clothing and hair, which billows from motorcycles and in the wake of explosions. Ryo's lecherous lines are always thrown off-kilter by his sense of justice and startling profundity, disconcerting the strong-willed women who are always a moment away from slapping him. Manga fans in the know will be eager to read this defining work that set the tone and majorly influenced modern manga, and it will also appeal to readers who enjoyed *Gunsmith Cats*, *Cat's Eye*, and *Golgo 13*. —*Ashley Hawkins*

Lord of the Flies: The Graphic Novel.

By William Golding and Aimée de Jongh. Art by Aimée de Jongh.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Penguin Classics, $30 (9780143138877). 741.5.

In this adaptation of Golding's modern classic, the text is as timeless and relevant as ever, with large blocks of the original used to narrate and describe scenes. This might seem to put pressure on artist de Jongh to adequately complement the iconic story, but it's quickly evident that she has deftly mastered the tone. Her soft, full-color illustrations in expressive ink lines, similar to the style of classic illustrators like Helen Oxenbury, accentuate the early adventure and mischief of the boys, giving these first sections a whimsical and carefree feel; even the imagined beasts that haunt the boys have a gentler tone, leaving them scary but not too threatening. This makes the story's darker turn all the more jarring; the dead bodies of the children drawn in this style are not only shocking but emphasize the senselessness and pettiness of war and conflict. De Jongh captivatingly ramps up the horror further with stark changes in color palettes and drawing style as the story careens toward the dramatic ending. An adaptation perfectly capturing the ghastly violence and agonizing emotion of the original. —*Leon Wagner*

YA: Lord of the Flies *is a canonical curriculum book, and tweens and teens encountering the novel in classroom settings will appreciate this evocative, faithful visualization. SH.*

Love 4 a Walk, v. 1.

By Nuria Sanguino. Art by the author.

Nov. 2025. 288p. WEBTOON Unscrolled, paper, $19.99 (9781998341665). 741.5.

In her last relationship, Pam and her now ex-boyfriend adopted a high-energy and destructive Doberman. Faced with saving her relationship or taking the dog, Bob, back to the shelter, Pam chose Bob over the heartless man she thought she loved. Now, she struggles to train Bob and keep her apartment from being shredded. Enter Tyler, the broody, hot neighbor who can hear everything through the thin walls—and who happens to be surprisingly good at training dogs. Everything is laid out perfectly for Pam to fall in love again, with a slight hiccup—Tyler's dog Tequila, a tiny, overprotective Shih Tzu who attacks any time a woman encroaches on Tyler's space. Sanguino's expressive art style provides plenty of character reactions from the main leads but also from the two dogs, whose personalities shine in every panel they're in. Filled with genuine interactions and plenty of relatable moments, this story is full of whimsy, romance, and silly animals. Both main characters bring complications and history—Pam's overthinking and Tyler's past relationship trauma—that grounds this romance in believable emotion. —*Sara Smith*

Miss Ruki.

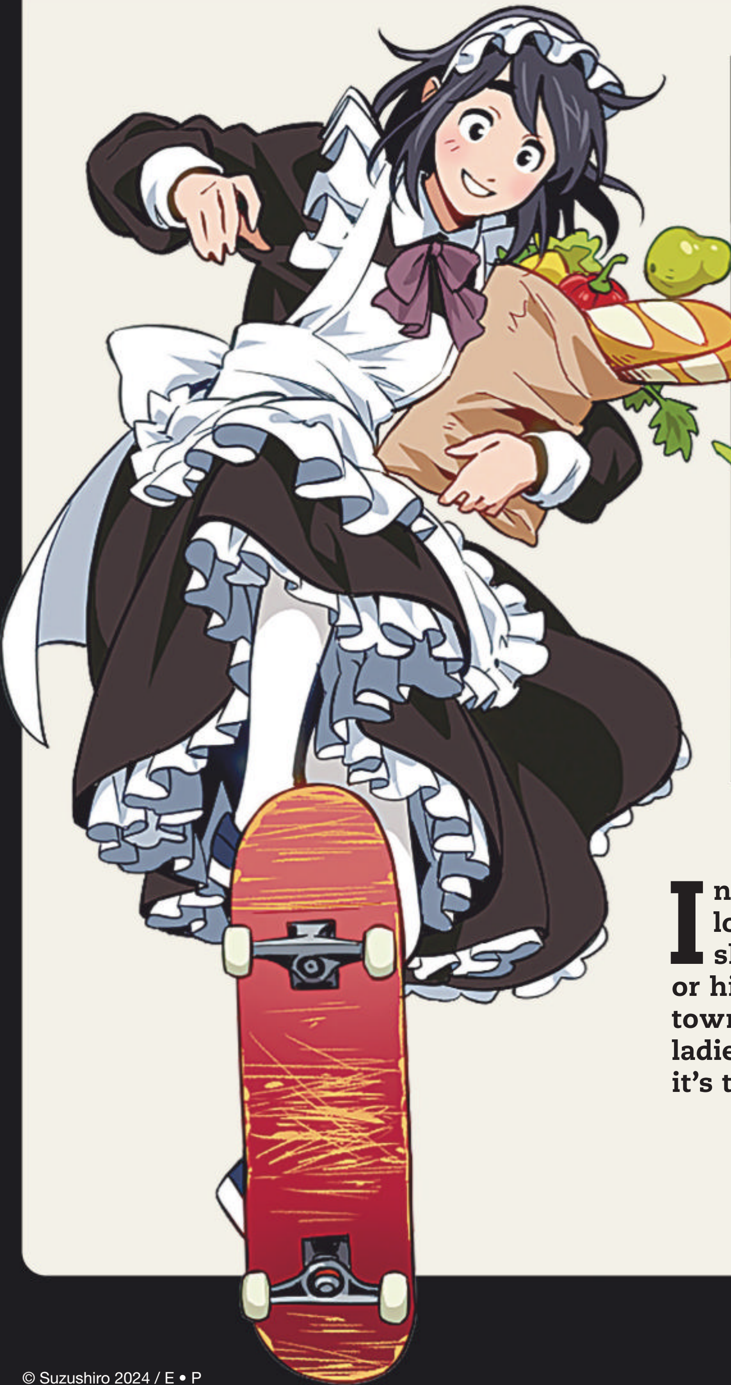
By Fumiko Takano. Art by the author. Tr. by Alexa Frank.

2025. 128p. New York Review, paper, $19.95 (9781681379401). 741.5.

In this delightful slice-of-life manga set during Japan's bubble era, a young woman rejects the lifestyle of the day for her own pace.

FROM COFFEE GRINDS TO GRINDING RAILS, ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

MAID TO SKATE



MAID TO SKATE
Story and Art by
SUZUSHIRO
MAID TO SKATE
SUZUSHIRO

On Sale 12/16/25

In this world, maids go about their lives in long black dresses, frilly aprons—and skate shoes?! Whether they're running errands or hitting the half-pipe, these maids shred the town. Like witches have their brooms, these ladies have their boards. If one thing's certain, it's that maids are totally *Maid to Skate.*

Maid to Skate
Story and Art by Suzushiro
Price: $14.99 US / $19.99 CAN • **ISBN:** 9781974755844

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Distributed by Simon & Schuster
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Miss Ruki is an unconventional manga by a master of the art who is known outside of Japan and whose cartoonish illustration style is unique in the field. This warm and welcoming window into the daily lives of Ruki and her friend Ecchan follows them through days spent collecting stamps, visiting the children's section of the library, and eating good food. The refreshing simplicity of the storytelling makes for light, liberating reading. Ruki's independent character with a strong sense of self drives the episodes onward. Takano's precise artwork is unembellished but very expressive. This is a treat for anyone interested in Japanese daily life or simply looking for a calm, relaxing read, and while Miss Ruki's concerns mostly pertain to adult life, some older teens may find reading it appealing for its art and relaxing nature. —*Ashley Hawkins*

Nocturnos.

By Laura Pérez. Art by the author. Tr. by Andrea Rosenberg.

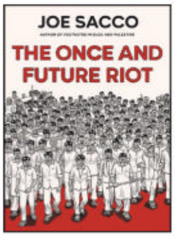
Oct. 2025. 192p. Fantagraphics, $29.99 (9798875001260). 741.5.

Appropriately dark and dusky artwork fills the pages of this poetic, atmospheric meditation on dreams that centers on the notion that "the night does not belong to us." The plot, such as it is, moves languidly from dreamer to dreamer without a strong sense of structure, but the atmosphere Pérez cultivates in her velvety blacks and dusty jewel tones, as trees loom, black cats lurk, and insomniacs lie awake in rumpled beds, is deeply evocative. Amid the wide swaths of color, Perez shows her knack for quickly capturing emotion in snapshot-like portraits of individual people. Those flashes of mundane reality flicker throughout longer dream sequences with fantastical creatures, territorial ghosts, or unsettling empty spaces, muddying the line between reality and dreaming. While she relies primarily on the art to do the talking, with spare voice-over and dialogue interrupting long stretches of wordless pages, Pérez skillfully excavates an uneasy feeling that night narrows the boundary between safety and vulnerability. This thought-provoking and moody volume will please readers looking for quietly eerie fare and lush art. —*Sarah Hunter*

★ The Once and Future Riot.

By Joe Sacco. Art by the author.

Oct. 2025. 144p. Holt/Metropolitan, $27.99 (9781250880260). 741.5.



Once again, the inimitable graphic journalist Sacco brings readers an investigation brought to life with his cartoonist skills, this time the Muzzafarnagar Riot in Uttar Pradesh, India, in 2013. Like his cartooning, Sacco presents the accounts in a variety of shades and nuance, not just mere black and white, as he interviews local governance, political and religious leaders, and the victims involved. The riot concerned yet another conflict between Hindus and Muslims, but Sacco highlights even further distinctions within those groups, such as Jats, and dives into the many conflicting accounts given by those involved. With help from local experts, he tries to determine where among the opposing stories the truth lies. This includes accounts of raiding, murder, arson, rape, and one particularly disturbing tale early on of a young Muslim woman, found by her mother, who was assaulted and left for dead with her throat cut. Though this is a specific conflict with its own complicated history between two groups, some of the accounts might resonate more universally, including in the U.S., as hate-filled slogans ("Go to Pakistan or Go to the Grave") are amplified and conspiracy theories, such as the concept of a "love jihad," are legitimized by those in power. This is beyond a 101 lesson on the riot and instead focuses purely on the human elements; fine journalism. —*Jack Phoenix*

Patchwork: A Graphic Biography of Jane Austen.

By Kate Evans. Art by the author.

Oct. 2025. 240p. Verso, $34.95 (9781804296226). 741.5.

This original and historically rich graphic biography uses a patchwork quilt as a framing device to pastiche together the story of Jane Austen's life. Austen created such a quilt in her later years, and Evans takes readers through the other likely textiles she would have touched, such as the cloth she wore as a baby, the papers she would've written upon, and of course the ever-important muslin. Evans employs an omniscient, storybook voice throughout, allowing readers to draw their own conclusions about the colorful cast of characters in Austen's life, such as her fascinating and vivacious cousin Eliza. That distant voice, however, is juxtaposed by political illustration–inspired watercolors that highlight everyone's emotions and flaws. Rich with creative liberties and historical detail, this is, in many ways, an examination of the world Austen lived in rather than about Austen herself. Back matter shows how many of these textiles would've first been touched by colonized people across the globe, and even Janeites will be surprised by some of the day-to-day facts they learn about the Regency Era. —*Biz Hyzy*

Total THB, v. 1.

By Paul Pope. Art by the author.

Nov. 2025. 208p. 23rd St., paper, $24.99 (9781596434059). 741.5.

Like his protagonist, HR Watson, Eisner-winning Pope was also a teen when he began imagining *THB*. Reintroducing Pope's originally self-published, 30-year-old cult series, this first of three planned editions collects his self-described "early efforts." Welcome to Mars, home to native Olmari, humans, and all manner of prescient robots. Youthful as she is, HR must occasionally entertain her "suitor"—"You don't need to talk to him, you need only to marry him," quips her personal robot Augustus. While her wealthy father and his associate Dr. Yukimoto attend to business up north, HR is left under the protection of THB—short for "tri-hydro-bioxygenate," a tiny pearl that morphs into a rubbery behemoth with the addition of water. But enemies abound, initially disguised as delivered gifts that become destructive forces. HR flees, but danger is never far. Pope's original black-and-white panels vary in style, as if reflecting experimentation and development, moving between line drawings to rougher sketches to detailed watercolor art. This updated *THB* awaits a new generation of admirers. —*Terry Hong*

Witchcraft.

By Sole Otero. Art by the author. Tr. by Andrea Rosenberg.

Oct. 2025. 376p. Fantagraphics, paper, $34.99 (9798875001277). 741.5.

This psychedelic, disjointed graphic novel uses horror elements to confront living outside of societal norms, violence against bodies, and female power. A cult of sisters and their revered goat looms over a town where men lose time and history is stained with death. Told in a series of episodes that connect to the cult over multiple time periods, the story will leave readers wondering whether the sisters are malevolent beings preying on random men and their libidos or if they're serving justice for crimes against women and children that have gone unpunished. The artwork does the heavy lifting here, using electric shades of pink and blue and exaggerated bodies that shift visual focus to body language and plays with perspective and size to convey emotions. As to be expected from a story engaging in these themes, the artwork depicts scenes of nudity, sexual abuse, and ritual violence. Translated from Spanish with references to the Mapuche people of Argentina, this visually stunning, interwoven story is a worthwhile read for readers who don't mind coming away with more questions than answers. —*Emerald Martinez*

Young Adult

Astral Panic.

By Katie Hicks. Art by the author.

Oct. 2025. 192p. Flying Eye, paper, $21.99 (9781838742089). Gr. 9–12. 741.5.

Gale, a young art student with a penchant for drawing fantasy characters, is struggling with such debilitating anxiety that he's likely to cut himself off from the world entirely if he can't get it under control. Unfortunately, his lifestyle brand of choice—Simply Pear, which boasts special beverages, an app with persistent notifications, and more—isn't doing him much good (in fact, it's likely making things worse). Enter his new roommate, Aiden, who is frankly a bit of a hot mess but might be just what Gale needs to reclaim his sense of self-confidence. What follows is a series of low-stakes adventures as Gale accompanies Aiden on a disastrous job hunt and meets the other members of Aiden's band, Astral Panic, leading him to being recruited to create a poster for their very first live show. Will the show go well? Will Aiden *ever* find a job? Will Gale survive the panic of living in the world? Hicks' 1990s-inflected, neon-green and -pink colored artwork is full of bubbly energy and comical asides that will keep readers turning the pages. —*Matthew Noe*

★ Kamudo, v. 1.

By Akira Himekawa. Art by the author.

Oct. 2025. 200p. VIZ Media, paper, $14.99 (9781974757800). Gr. 6–12. 741.5.

KAMUDO
AKIRA HIMEKAWA

In the age before humans, demi-dragons brought prosperity through the power to harness Wind and the blessings of life-giving Pulse energy from their goddess, Lady Ryusui. One fateful day, everything changes with the birth of Kamuna, a human with the left arm and tail of a demi-dragon. As Kamuna matures, he struggles to find his place in the world but begins learning ancient dragon fighting techniques all the same, hoping to learn control over the Wind himself. Simmering beneath Kamuna's conflict is an ominous prophecy foretelling a change to the demi-beings' societies that will either bring a new age of growth or a collapse of everything they know. Many interesting characters have already been introduced, including Kamuna's rival, Gindu, a demi-dragon who begrudges Kamuna's close relationship with his sister, Laseri, who herself is the pinnacle of positivity amid the strife. Within the first chapter, Himekawa has crafted a beautifully illustrated story with a deeply complex world full of masterfully conceived creatures. The character designs and settings are rich in detail, reminiscent of the fine-line work of *Witch Hat Atelier*. Some fantasy violence and complicated world-building make this story overall suited for readers ready to undertake a large-scale *Dragonriders of Pern*–style fantasy epic. —*Sara Smith*

A Little Step, v. 1.

By Mimi Szeto. Art by the author.

Nov. 2025. 176p. Mad Cave/Nakama Press, paper, $10.99 (9781545821749). Gr. 7–12. 741.5.

This emotional manhua about the anxieties and exhilarations of making art in the midst of self-discovery is perfect for readers who enjoyed Naoshi Arawakan's *Your Lie in April* or Makoto Shinkai and Ranmaru Kotone's *Your Name.* Lau Yu Kiu is a talented art student who dreams of studying abroad, but she struggles to create when she's being watched or when the heat of competition is upon her. One day, while hiding in an empty classroom to try to push herself to create, she overhears her classmate, Lee Hou Yuet, in the school stairwell playing music that moves her. Drawn to a fellow creative, Yu Kiu slowly gets to know her mysterious classmate better, and they motivate each other to pursue their goals despite the pressures they face. Colored in a muted palette, this manhua has a light, sketch-like quality that's dreamy and a bit unfinished, rather like the protagonists. This is sure to resonate with teens, particularly those experiencing anxieties and family pressures in their pursuit of creative futures. —*Ashley Hawkins*

My Life as an Internet Novel, v. 1.

By A Hyeon. Art by Yu Han-Ryeo.

Oct. 2025. 272p. Random/RH Graphic, $24.99 (9780593901281). Gr. 6–10. 741.5.

Dani is fighting the urge to fall in love with the internet-novel world in this hilariously sweet manhwa. Avid reader Dani spends the night before her first day of middle school devouring a romance, only to find herself waking up in another world. Now she's costarring in an internet novel taking place at Jijon (Epic) Middle School where there is a heroine (beautiful and smart next-door neighbor Yeoryung) and associated love interests (the handsome four kings) plus frenemies galore. Dani knows all the tropes and plots twists, so she'll surely not fall in love, too—right? Hyeon and Han-Ryeo's delightful webtoon is now available in print, and the vertical-scrolling format has been carefully remixed into a book format with the colorful backgrounds and cute character illustrations reproduced in fantastic quality. Yeoryung, for instance, is encircled in vibrant indigo and violet flowers as striking as her purple eyes. Dani's adventures are darling and daring in this charming choice perfect for tween readers navigating new worlds of love and friendship. —*Victoria Rahbar*

Phantom Busters, v. 1.

By Neoshoco. Art by the author.

Oct. 2025. 216p. VIZ Media, paper, $11.99 (9781974757831). Gr. 9–12. 741.5.

Eugene, Mogari, Kaoru, and Tamon are four first-year high-school students who form unlikely friendships and a new "special interest group" at their prestigious academy. Three of them have psychic abilities: Kaoru sees ghosts, Tamon hears ghosts, and Mogari can borrow psychic abilities in order to eat ghosts. Eugene is top of their class and part English gentleman and has no psychic abilities of his own, but he becomes swept up in Mogari's quests to exorcise vicious spirits. This story is peppered with hilarity and well-timed, laid-back jokes, and Neoshoco's illustration style is crisp, simple, and effective, providing exaggerated reactions to land punchlines and frightening ghouls to intensify the creepiness when necessary. This volume provides an ample amount of world-building that hints at a larger society of exorcism throughout Japan. Similar to *Jujutsu Kaisen*, this series could be a great next read for fans of that one. —*Sara Smith*

Separated from Santo.

By Brian Barazzuol. Art by Cam Drysdale.

Oct. 2025. 128p. Heritage, paper, $24.95 (9781772035629). Gr. 6–11. 741.5.

In this graphic biography written by the subject's great-grandson, readers learn about Santo and Alice Pasqualini, immigrants who moved from Mussolini's fascist Italy to Vancouver, where they started a family and a bakery. Having lived in Canada for several years, one day in 1940, Santo, along with other Italian men, is detained by the Canadian government for suspicion of being a security risk. While readers may be familiar with the U.S. government's internment of the Japanese during WWII, many will not know about this chapter in North American history. Told in an accessible manner, Barazzuol's narrative is focused most on Santo and the family's experience while in the internment camps. While the story is one worth sharing, the poem spread throughout feels awkward. The art is easy to follow, with Santo's story colored in shades of brown, lending to the historical and bleak feel at the time. The glossary provided will assist tween and teen readers who may be unfamiliar with the terms used. —*Suzanne Temple*

Middle

Cat Mask Boy, v. 1.

By Linus Liu. Art by the author.

Oct. 2025. 192p. Mad Cave/Nakama Press, paper, $10.99 (9781545821732). Gr. 5–8. 741.5.

Tiger is not a particularly talented student. His aspirations are to become a superhero like Cat Mask Boy, who he claims is cooler than the insect-inspired Kamen Rider, a transformable tokusatsu character similar to Power Rangers. When it's time for report cards to go home for parents' signatures, Tiger's accidentally gets taken home by a stranger from a neighboring city, which launches him into his very own superhero adventure to rescue his grades and save himself from certain punishment. Along the way, Tiger participates in nostalgic games like marbles, hopscotch, betting card games, and many more. He finds a kindred spirit in Dragon, another cat-masked kid, who serves as a guide and companion on his excursion. Liu's color tones of burnt oranges, greens, and browns evoke a bygone era and reinforce the childhood themes throughout. Some mild cursing may elevate this otherwise silly story out of the younger all-ages category. —*Sara Smith*

Dream Warriors: A New World.

By Jesse Byrd. Art by Berto Santiago and others.

Oct. 2025. 152p. Baker & Taylor/Paw Prints, paper, $13.99 (9781223187938). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.

Khi's confused when he wakes up in a paper boat traveling down an ethereal river to the afterlife, and he's more confused when he passes through a portal to Cloud 9, the home of dream warriors, who protect their assigned dreamers from their fears and the frightening agents of Pit 6. While Khi learns about his new role and tries to become a higher-ranked dream warrior, the outcasts living in Pit 6 are hatching a scheme to take over Cloud 9 for themselves. Meanwhile, Khi tries to protect his sister and find out how he ended up in the river to begin with, tasks which become increasingly complicated when his assigned dreamer is his sister's bully. Byrd's imaginative story is superbly realized by the bright, bold, and energetic artwork, which boasts an impressive array of inventive character design and world building. Dynamic fight scenes and dream logic add lively energy to the emotionally grounded elements of the story, which ends on a cliffhanger. A fantastic romp for kids who like dense storytelling and videogame-like plot structures. —*Jonathan Khan*

The Five Wolves.

By Peter McCarty. Art by the author.

Oct. 2025. 288p. First Second, $29.99 (9781250170620). Gr. 4–8.

the Five Wolves
Peter McCarty

In an experiment profound in both premise and execution (as well as profoundly silly), Caldecott Honor artist McCarty unleashes a genre-bending "graphic poem." Pages with ample white space present wordless images etched with dense Gorey-esque textured linework, interspersed with rectangles packed with hand-lettered swirls of words and numbers, through which an emerging universe evolves into an odyssey of truly epic proportions. Five erudite, spiky-furred wolves are at sea on a Viking ship, in pursuit of making art. Their wild encounters—debating with an enormous fish over its portrait, being attacked by taunting feline rivals, adopting an enigmatic "animal," a rescue by cave-painting bunnies, weathering a dragon's fiery mural critique, battling the dread Flying Yorbas—veer between slapstick absurdity and deep philosophical inquiry about the nature of art. Though concluding battles bring some weapon-wielding mayhem, the violence is tempered via the Bosch-like carnival of strangeness. While the phrases are packed in dense patterns with numbers and small drawings, their relative sizes suggest an order of importance: the biggest conveys a narrative, of sorts, with embellishing comic asides on a whirl of smaller font. With echoes of Sendak, Selznick, Shaun Tan, even Monty Python, this gloriously absurdist tale is still unmistakably McCarty's own. Offering a profound reward to readers willing to lose themselves in its eccentric rhythms, sly humor, and surreal moments, this marvel is a challenging, provocative, and unforgettable meditation on art-making and imagination itself. —*Rebecca Thornburgh*

MANGA ESSENTIALS

Crafts & Hobbies

by Sara Smith

Many books blend manga and nonfiction storytelling styles when it comes to information on hobby topics such as cosplay creation, cooking, traveling, drawing, or gardening. Authors may use manga chapters as a throughline between informational text or choose to convey information entirely in manga form. Check out these books on popular hobby topics that use manga storytelling.

Cosplay

Cosplay Basics: A Beginners Guide to the Art of Costume Play. By Yuki Takasou & RUMINE. 2015. One Peace, $18.95 (9781935548812). Gr. 7–12.

Both authors enjoy cosplay in Japan and created this beginner's guide to induct the cosplay-curious into the hobby. Each section is introduced with a manga chapter following two friends—one an experienced cosplayer, the other a beginner. While some websites included have already become defunct since the book's original publication, the remaining tips and tools are useful enough without the web resources. Some advice specific to readers in Japan won't be as useful for North American readers, but there's plenty of helpful and insightful advice for both beginners and cosplayers who have already made a few costumes.

Manga Guides/Food

The Manga Guide to Japanese Food: Everything You Want to Know About the History, Ingredients and Folklore of Japan's Unique Cuisine. By Hiroshi Nagashima. Art by Megumi Osaki. 2024. Tuttle, paper, $18.99 (9784805317624). Gr. 9–12.

Nagashima and Osaki combine manga interludes with nonfiction chapters to cover important topics of Japanese culinary history. As readers follow high-schooler Manabu, who quickly learns expertise in Japanese cuisine is more than knife skills, they'll discover historical information on Japan's rice culture, seafood farming, domestication of mold, discovery and development of umami, and the globalization of sushi. This informative title is a valuable primer for readers who are interested in history, but it can also serve as a basis for learning more about culturally significant culinary traditions. Tuttle has a wealth of other similar manga guides in its catalog, such as *The Manga Guide to Organic Vegetable Gardening,* as well as how-to-draw-manga titles.

Oishinbo. By Tetsu Kariya. Art by Akira Hanasaki. 2009–10. Viz. Gr. 9–12. 7 volumes.

Each book in this series focuses on a different element of Japanese cuisine and culture through the eyes of food journalist Yamaoka. Unfortunately, Yamaoka continuously runs into his estranged father, a famous gourmet who is determined to sabotage Yamaoka's article. These manga are fairly dense with some elevated vocabulary, and given that Yamaoka is an adult sampling restaurants, alcohol is present throughout.

Art

Making Manga: The Saturday AM Way. By Saturday AM. Illus. 2025. Quarto/Rockport, paper, $21.99 (9780760389928). Gr. 9–12.

From worldbuilding to creating compelling characters to artistic choices, this guide is packed with information from creators who are writing, illustrating, and publishing manga and have been honing their craft for years. There are candid interviews with important and honest tips, including process details down to marketing and distribution, from an array of perspectives to emphasize that there's more than one journey. Starting each chapter is a gag manga featuring characters who are struggling to write their own manga.

Saturday AM Presents How to Draw Diverse Manga. By Saturday AM. illus. 2022. Quarto/Rockport, paper, $24.99 (9780760375426). Gr. 9–12.

While there are many important and informative guides on drawing manga available on the market, this guide provides valuable insight into crafting diverse characters outside of the norm seen in Japanese illustrative style. Illustrators provide details on how to accurately depict full lips, round noses, and a variety of textured hair types, to name a few strategies. Each component is broken down into easy-to-replicate techniques.

The Ghost of Wreckers Cove.

By Angelica Del Campo. Art by Liniers.

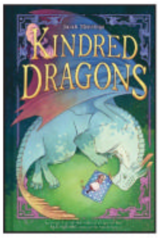
2025. 192p. Papercutz, paper, $14.99 (9781545821244). Gr. 4–8. 741.5.

Grief has set two sisters adrift, but while unraveling the mystery of an old lighthouse, they may also rediscover their bond as sisters. After the death of their mother, Cristina and Martha have very different outlooks about their stay in an old lighthouse keeper's home—with no wifi—where their father largely leaves them to their own devices. Cristina, the elder and more cynical, looks down on Martha's exuberance and unending supply of imagination until they meet Ida, the ghost of the deceased lighthouse keeper with a fondness for seashells. To help her move on, the sisters must find the lighthouse lens that disappeared at the same time Ida died. While the central mystery can feel a bit lackluster at times, this graphic novel's strengths lie in Liniers' ink-lined, full-color scenery of a small town and rocky beaches, and the sisters' utilization of the library is a welcome reminder of the ways libraries support curiosity. The back matter includes interesting information about lighthouses and wreckers. A solid choice for fans of mystery and stories about siblings. —*Emerald Martinez*

Kindred Dragons.

By Sarah Mensinga. Art by the author.

Oct. 2025. 208p. Abrams/Fanfare, $24.99 (9781419771163). Gr. 4–8. 741.5.



In a windswept corner of Prince Edward Island where a few anointed girls await their own dragon egg as a rite of passage, Alice fervently hopes for her moment, even though she knows she's not the chosen kind. No egg will be coming for her—she's too ordinary yet too fanciful. But when she stumbles upon a cranky, aging dragon named Brimstone living hermit-like in the forest, her offer of blueberries wins his friendship. Ailing and abandoned, Brim needs help; Alice's quest to reunite him with his Kindred reveals buried family regrets, the townspeople's hidden distrust of dragons, and her own wondrous discovery that she shares the rare gift of deep dragon connection. Alice's bond with Brim glows at the book's heart—fierce, tender, and utterly transformative. Headstrong, vulnerable, compassionate, and endlessly full of stories, Alice is a luminous, relatable heroine, worthy of comparison to Anne of Green Gables. Mensinga spins a gentle fantasy threaded with big feelings—grief and wonder, betrayal and belonging. She populates her period tale with a diverse cast of people (and dragons), while her art is quietly spectacular: soft pastels fill crisp linework in clever layouts and well-paced panels. With whimsical touches of world building and a vividly evoked historical setting, the story blends specificity with sweep. A tale of rule-breaking, reconciliation, and rousing, rapturous dragon rides—this one will sweep you up in its glorious wings. —*Rebecca Thornburgh*

My Sister the Werebeast.

By Alina Tysoe. Art by the author.

Oct. 2025. 320p. First Second, $23.99 (9781250896698). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.

Alina Tysoe
My Sister the Werebeast

Mira and Rosie have been left on babysitter duty. Their parents recently departed for an important expedition, leaving the two girls to look after their little sister, Peanut. Seems like an easy gig, right? Not the case. Peanut has begun to transform into a strange creature when her emotions are high, leaving her sisters completely baffled. After doing a little research, Mira and Rosie realize their sister might be a werebeast, which wouldn't be a bad thing, except that monsters are hunted in the city of Whisper Cove, where they live. To make matters worse, unbeknownst to the sisters, a creepy blob has been accidentally released from a magic cube in their house and is rapidly growing in size as it gradually sucks up the magic expended by Peanut. With their parents still gone, the two girls must do their best to keep Peanut safe and hidden, which is easier said than done. Tysoe blends whimsy and magic with plenty of heart in this playful, engaging story, and those elements extend to her playful, brightly colored, and cartoonishly rounded artwork, which has the energetic motion of a Cartoon Network animation. Superb pacing and meaningful stakes will keep the pages turning in this excellent fantasy adventure with just the right amount of humor and meaningful emotion. Hand to readers who loved Svetlana Chmakova's Weirn Books series. —*Jonathan Khan*

Psychic Investigators, Evil Exterminators.

By KT Healey. Art by the author.

2025. 208p. Top Shelf, paper, $14.99 (9781603095648). Gr. 4–8. 741.5.

Gabriel Navarro lives with his mom and aunt in his grandmother's house. For as long as he can remember, things have been perfect. Over time, he's grown extremely close to his paranormality-obsessed aunt, who instills in him the idea that he can speak with ghosts. The life Gabe knew comes crashing down when his aunt suddenly dies, leaving him feeling alone and doubtful. If he's able to speak with ghosts, why can't he contact his aunt in the afterlife? Enter Clementine, an eccentric classmate. During a school field trip and after a frightening encounter, the two band together to form the Psychic Investigators, Evil Exterminators. Gabe's out to prove that he's psychic and able to communicate with ghosts, while Clementine's just along for the ride and the live-stream viewers. Healey's elastic, exaggerated figure design and bright color palette amplify the cartoonish comedy of the story, which is thoughtfully balanced by quieter moments when Gabe struggles with his very real grief. Lovable characters, laugh-out-loud moments, eerie atmosphere, and fantastic pacing make this a great choice for middle-grade comics fans. —*Jonathan Khan*

Rodeo Hawkins and the Daughters of Mayhem.

By John Claude Bemis. Art by Nicole Miles.

2025. 272p. Holiday/Margaret Ferguson, $22.99 (9780823445127). Gr. 4–8. 741.5.

Who's this party of Dungeons-&-Dragons-looking folks appearing out of thin air? Why shouldn't Sydney Poblocki, sick of moving from one foster family to another, go with them, especially if it means becoming a member of their multiverse-protecting paladin order? But wait! Who is Rodeo Hawkins, not to mention her Daughters of Mayhem, and why is she claiming the paladins have been murdering Sydney Poblockis from across the multiverse in the name of some ancient prophecy? Are they "interdimensional scoundrels" or a subversive resistance out to protect the cosmos's final Sydney Poblocki? And what about Sydney, anyway? Is he the key to the destruction of the multiverse or just a lonely kid looking for somewhere he can belong? That's a lot of questions, and finding the answers requires intricate exposition, rip-snorting action, hefty doses of snarky humor, and a dab of poignant emotion. Luckily, the art is zany and free-wheeling enough to support the pace, and the humor is realistically designed and tightly composed enough to ground the emotion and the cosmic and Sydney's personal stakes. —*Jesse Karp*

Children's

Ducky the Spy.

By Sean E Avery. Art by the author.

2025. 144p. Walker Australia, paper, $15.99 (9781760659356). Gr. 1–4. 741.5.

Ducky, a dim detective who doesn't know the difference between a trough and a tractor, and his assistant Donny Donkey, a drooling master of distraction who communicates only with "harnk" sound effects, set to sleuthing in this farmyard whodunit. After attempting to apprehend a "slop stealing scoundrel" at the farm of always-angry Mr. Pig, the not-so-bright spies continue bumbling their way through the barnyard to infiltrate a cat gang that has kidnapped Mr. Pig's son, a goat named Richard. Wearing unconvincing cat disguises designed by Gretta, Mr. Pig's equally unexplainable chicken daughter, Ducky and Donny manage to outwit a couple of mob-coded felines even though Donny wears his getup incorrectly, creating a silly-faced cat on his backside. Avery's bold line drawings of the animals and pastoral settings featuring pastel-hued backgrounds with dot accents provide visual delight in short chapters that end with either a punch line or a cliffhanger. Readers new to the clueless-detective routine who enjoy slapstick antics (like Donny's gassy reactions when scared) will get a laugh out of this barnyard romp. —*Michelle Proper*

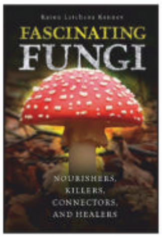
Youth Nonfiction

Older Readers

Fascinating Fungi: Nourishers, Killers, Connectors, and Healers.

By Karen Latchana Kenney.

Oct. 2025. 136p. illus. Lerner/Twenty-First Century, lib. ed., $37.32 (9798765611173). Gr. 7–12. 579.6.



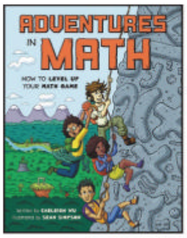
From the eye-catching color photographs to the perfectly named chapter titles, readers will be hooked on this fun and informative book about fungi that truly lives up to its title. Readers will learn what fungi are, how they have evolved, their structure, and how they eat and expand their spores. Chapters introduce distinct types of mushrooms, from "the beauties" (mauve parachute, purple pinwheel) to "the oddities" that are grotesque and terrifying (bleeding tooth, devil's fingers or octopus stinkhorn, and zombie ant fungus). Kenney also explains how certain fungi are poisonous, how fungi can be a source of food and drink, the healing and medicinal properties of fungi, and how they can ecologically save the planet by providing bees with antivirals (thus extending their lifespan) and through mycorestoration. Diagrams, graphs, and charts help readers visualize complex data, such as how underground fungal threads deliver nutrients to tree roots. Sidebars profile expert mycologists, interesting facts, and pop-culture trivia (*The Last of Us* television show is based on the video game focusing on a zombie-like fungal infection in humans). Back matter offers a glossary, mycophile tips, source notes, selected bibliography, further resources, and index. Highly recommended to seasoned "fungi-philes" and those unfamiliar with the threading marvels. —*Sharon Rawlins*

Middle Readers

Adventures in Math: How to Level Up Your Math Game.

By Carleigh Wu. Illus. by Sean Simpson.

Oct. 2025. 80p. Kids Can, $19.99 (9781525311321). Gr. 3–7. 511.



This is a great book for libraries to have on hand when a parent comes in needing help with their child who's struggling with math. Part of the book's appeal is that there's relatively little math compared to the amount of practical, entertaining, and reassuring advice on changing mindsets and discovering the fun aspects of problem solving. The engaging premise is that a bunch of kids are trekking through the jungle, facing all kinds of challenges, and need to come up with pretty complex solutions. There are multiple ways of solving each problem, involving exploration, estimation, and experimentation, and the narrative is all about slowing down, persisting, asking for help, learning from mistakes, and playing around—whether they're creating drawings, diagrams, charts, or digital models. Multiple sidebars highlight individuals who used math to come up with innovative ideas (including many who weren't very good at math as kids); others highlight real-world conundrums (building bridges, operating robotic arms in outer space), artistic applications (crocheting hyperbolic geometry models, coding video games), and helpful hints (try singing formulas to help remember them). Colorful graphics bounce off pages and effectively support concepts; references and sources are provided. The author is a math coach, and her expertise is evident. Be sure to leave this out for browsers to discover, too. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Dead Ends! Flukes, Flops & Failures That Sparked Medical Marvels.

By Lindsey Fitzharris and Adrian Teal. Illus. by Adrian Teal.

Oct. 2025. 160p. Bloomsbury, $19.99 (9781547615025). Gr. 5–8. 610.9.

This is, appropriately, a thoroughly disgusting and sacrilegious book about the misguided ministrations of physicians over the past few millennia as they sought cures for all kinds of ailments based on religious, philosophical, and sometimes whimsical notions. The tone alternates among informative, sensational, irreverent, and tongue-in-cheek (sometimes literally), resulting in engaging and engrossing reading. The fairly lengthy chapters (10 to 20 pages each) concentrate on discrete body parts (skulls, limbs, hearts, blood, guts) and address such concerns as basic functions, common diseases and injuries, notable plagues and disasters, biographical profiles of doctors and patients, and graphic descriptions of the well-intentioned—but often deplorable—experiments, operations, and medications that eventually led to medical breakthroughs. Descriptions of period living conditions in various cultures provide social context; facts about health and hygiene integrate effortlessly as previous misconceptions are explored and skewered, and there's reassuring information about contemporary practices. Multiple sidebars and humorous illustrations support the text; ample chapter notes and lists of references provide fodder for further exploration. Good luck keeping this gross one on library shelves once kids hear about it. —*Kathleen McBroom*

How Rude! Animals That Burp, Toot, Spit, and Screech to Survive.

By Chana Stiefel. Illus. by Anna Louise Oliver.

Nov. 2025. 96p. Union Square Kids, $17.99 (9781454956440). Gr. 3–6. 591.57.

Even readers who glory in wild nature at its grossest may be skipping their lunches in the wake of this gleeful gallery of repulsive bad behavers. There are around 30 all told, from the poop-eating guinea pig and "snot shooters" like the hagfish to blue whales, whose vocalizations can be louder than jet engines, and certain sea cucumbers and tree frogs that literally puke their guts out in a defense strategy politely known as "full gastric eversion." Oliver's illustrations tend to tone down the ick factor, as she depicts naturally posed creatures in minimally detailed settings and explicit but generally restrained-looking action. Steifel shows fewer compunctions—she spews out jokes, reactive side comments, and basic "foul facts" on her subjects, and she asks leading questions of the different specialist researchers interviewed in each of the eight thematic chapters: "You helped create the world's first and largest mucus library. *Whaaat?*" At the end, she also makes a plea for her readers to respect these animals. Rude they may be, but are they not also remarkable? —*John Peters*

I Am My Name: A Girl's Journey to Finding Her Cree Family.

By Na'kuset and Judith Henderson. Illus. by Onedove.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Knopf, $19.99 (9780593648766). Gr. 1–4. 971.0049.

Thousands of children were stolen from their Indigenous families and placed with non-Native adoptive parents during the Sixties Scoop. Na'kuset was one, and she shares her experience in this lyrical autobiographical picture book. From missing her sister to feeling as though she doesn't belong, Na'kuset struggles in her new home. But her adoptive grandmother, Bubbie, offers love, warmth, and safety for the young child. Na'kuset finds faith at her synagogue, builds friendships, and ultimately begins growing roots in her new home. Yet Na'kuset still misses her sister. When a neighbor calls her a "little Cree girl," she begins to remember who she is and yearns to search for her biological family. As an adult, she returns to Bubbie's loving arms and finds the reconnection she's been yearning for. The relationship between Na'kuset and her grandmother offers a healing balm, while Onedove's illustrations shine. Vibrant colors contrast with deep hues, suiting the tone of each spread while underscoring the emotional beat. A tender, beautifully told personal account of the Sixties Scoop. —*Christine Hartman Derr*

Life (As We Know It).

By Ziggy Hanaor. Illus. by Cristóbal Schmal.

Oct. 2025. 72p. Cicada, $21.99 (9781800660564). Gr. 2–5. 551.7.

This lovely picture book will be especially useful for assuaging eco-anxiety and countering end-of-the-world doomsaying. The action begins back before the universe exists, before time exists, when a tiny dot explodes into matter and starts ever-evolving processes that morph into life as we know it. Lyrical sentences supported by intriguing illustrations follow chronological developments: galaxies and planets, Earth, living cells, photosynthesis, myriad plants and creatures, meteor strikes, extinctions, evolution, hominids, civilizations, global warming. There are helpful references (“If you counted from one to a billion, it would take you 37 years”) and acknowledged mysteries (“But some things don’t make sense. Like the tears in the fabric of the universe called black holes”). The effortless, incontrovertible underlying message is that life on Earth has continually adapted, no matter what, and life will continue, no matter what. Younger audiences will follow the logical progression and enjoy the whimsical drawings; older readers will be reassured by the soothing big-picture approach. Be sure to leave this British import out within easy reach. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Omnibird: An Avian Investigator’s Handbook.

By Giselle Clarkson. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 96p. Lerner/Gecko, $24.99 (9798765670514). Gr. 3–6. 598.0.

Chances are good that there’s a bird nearby right now, but they’re so ubiquitous that they can sometimes go unnoticed. Luckily, *Omnibird* sets out to prove that just because something is ordinary doesn’t mean it isn’t also extraordinary. Included here are detailed hints for investigative strategies for viewing birds, even if they’re far away (this sometimes involves hilarious instructions on bird imitations, for readers so inclined). There are in-depth depictions of bird anatomy, songs, behaviors, and, yes, even droppings and pellets, but these aren’t dry discussions; they’re all tinged with cheeky humor and outlandish captions, providing a brilliant balance of entertainment and education. What other birding books include sections called “How to Pick Up a Chicken” and “Underrepresented Bird’s-Eye-Views,” including what a chick would see while hatching out of an egg? Amusing artwork ranges from comical cartoon stylings to surprisingly effective lifelike renderings and gives a marvelous sense of scale and personality. An unconventional and irresistible avian introduction, sure to delight any fledgling birder. —*Emily Graham*

Persian Mythology: Epic Stories of Gods, Heroes, and Monsters.

By Ryan Bani Tahmaseb. Illus. by Reza Dalvand.

Nov. 2025. 128p. Running Press Kids, $19.99 (9780762489763). Gr. 3–7. 398.2.

While many kids are accustomed to exposure to Greek and Roman mythology, they may not be as familiar with the traditional literature of Persia. These thrilling, sometimes gory, and thoroughly engaging folktales have been rewritten (in the introduction, the author says he’s “blended preexisting elements with my own imagination”) and come to life through especially descriptive language and vivid descriptions. The tales maintain the traditional cadence of a folktale but incorporate dialogue that adds humor and helps make unfamiliar characters relatable. The action-intensive stories run from a couple to seven or eight pages long, begging to be read aloud. Stylish, intriguing illustrations introduce each tale; there’s an author’s note and a list of resources. This accessible resource will be useful for reinforcing genre traits and contrasting myths of different cultures, in that there are creation tales, stories about the first humans, legends about the exploits of heroes and kings, good and evil gods and demons, and even a love story. This attractive compilation will make a great addition to world-folktale collections. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Real-Life Disasters.

By Anna Crowley Redding. Illus. by Robbie Cathro.

Oct. 2025. 208p. Candlewick, $17.99 (9781536213416). Gr. 3–6. 363.34.

Disasters are a perpetual source of curiosity for kids, and this book from the Danger

THE TRAILBLAZING JOURNALIST WHO CAPTURED ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S HEART
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Files series offers fresh ways of learning the facts, identifying the causes, and realizing the impacts of five historic catastrophes: the Great Chicago Fire, the sinking of the *Titanic*, the crash of the *Hindenburg*, the Boston Molasses Flood, and the early twentieth century's Spanish flu pandemic. Each episode is presented as a criminal investigation, with plenty of data for readers to analyze: historic and social context, background information, logistical facts (strengths and weaknesses, limits, contemporary understandings of technologies), facts, profiles of significant historical figures, and simulated eyewitness reports, often attributed to child survivors. This information appears as scribbled notes, typed-up reports, and paper-clipped snippets integrated into time-line narratives as events unfold, supported by numerous drawings and sketches. Each disaster also offers a simple scientific-inquiry activity: Does fire need oxygen to burn? How are germs transmitted? Chapters end with safety measures put into place to avoid repeat occurrences; copious chapter notes are provided. This is sure to be popular with researchers, browsers, and catastrophe-minded leisure readers. —*Kathleen McBroom*

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AVAILABLE AS ACCESSIBLE EBOOKS

Snowshoe Kate and the Hospital Built for Pennies.

By Margi Preus. Illus. by Jaime Zollars.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Abrams, $19.99 (9781419756719). K–Gr. 4. 610.924.

Overcoming social norms of the early twentieth century, Dr. Kate Pelham Newcomb became an indispensable part of her rural Wisconsin community. Driving a daily route of 70 miles, she did whatever it took (including snowshoeing or canoeing) to reach her patients and fashioned medical supplies out of whatever was available. Our narrator is the imagined voice of one of Dr. Kate's young patients, who explains how a class project—collecting a million pennies to help build a hospital—caught the nation's attention. Donations poured in by the truckload until Dr. Kate's hospital became a reality. Brisk text incorporates fun facts about Dr. Kate's work, parades, and penny storage without losing the plot or getting bogged down. Illustrations include thoughtful period details along with some whimsy, and young readers fascinated by big numbers will love the striking wordless two-page spread of nothing but tiny pennies. Back matter includes photos, biographical details, notes about the illustrator's process, and a bibliography. An engaging narrative showcasing an exceptional woman, a time, and a place not often featured in picture-book biographies. —*Elisha Brookover*

★ This is Not a Small Voice: Poems by Black Poets.

Ed. by Traci N. Todd. Illus. by Jade Orlando.

2025. 128p. Nosy Crow, $24.99 (9798887772042). Gr. 1–5. 811.

One hundred poems, compiled by Todd, showcase the culture and joy of Blackness. Poets of the past, such as Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou, and more contemporary voices, such as Renée Watson and Amanda Gorman, highlight the Black experience through verse and rich watercolor illustrations. From a mermaid who is as beautiful as she is dangerous to constellations that form famous Black people in history, the artwork is as memorable as the poems. The poems spotlight several facets of the Black experience, including the African diaspora, segregation, the importance of the Black family, and even Black hair care. Some poems focus on the real struggles of Black youth—for instance, the adultification of Black youth by police—while others focus on the realm of myth with the story of Anancy. People are illustrated in all shades of brown and black and with hair of various types and textures. Poetry forms range from haiku to free verse, with many styles in between. An introduction sets the scene for the anthology, while an afterword explains the cultural significance of several of the poems. This col-

lection of poems can be enjoyed by children and adults alike. —*Ashley Leffel*

Unreal: Can You Tell Fact from Fake?

By Kate Simpson. Illus. by Leila Rudge.

Oct. 2025. 72p. Annick, $24.99 (9781834020136). Gr. 2–5. 153.42.

There's been a museum mix-up: displays from the Myths and Legends exhibit were accidentally brought to the Natural History wing, which features animals and plants. Now one of the installation workers is asking readers to help him sort through each section and identify the fake among the real specimens. To help readers glean fact from fiction, he presents six guiding questions to help discern if information is reliable. On topical spreads, such as "Predators," "Life Below Ground," and "Plants and Fungi," short descriptions accompany five charmingly illustrated specimens with similar traits. The following double-page spread reveals which four are real and which one is not, with lengthier explanations of each. The brevity of the initial specimen descriptions offers a fun opportunity for students to research and practice evaluating information. Occasional supplemental text, such as on famous hoaxes from history, offers more examples of misinformation and how to spot it. Enchanting, lightly shaded watercolor-and-colored-pencil illustrations add levity to this important topic. Astute readers will notice progressive changes in the installation worker's appearance and one final mythical creature. —*Angela Leeper*

The Wizard's Guide to Magical Experiments: 40 Science Experiments to Try at Home.

By A. J. Wood. Illus. by Jo Rioux.

2025. 32p. Abrams/Magic Cat, $24.99 (9781419786754). Gr. 3–6. 507.8.

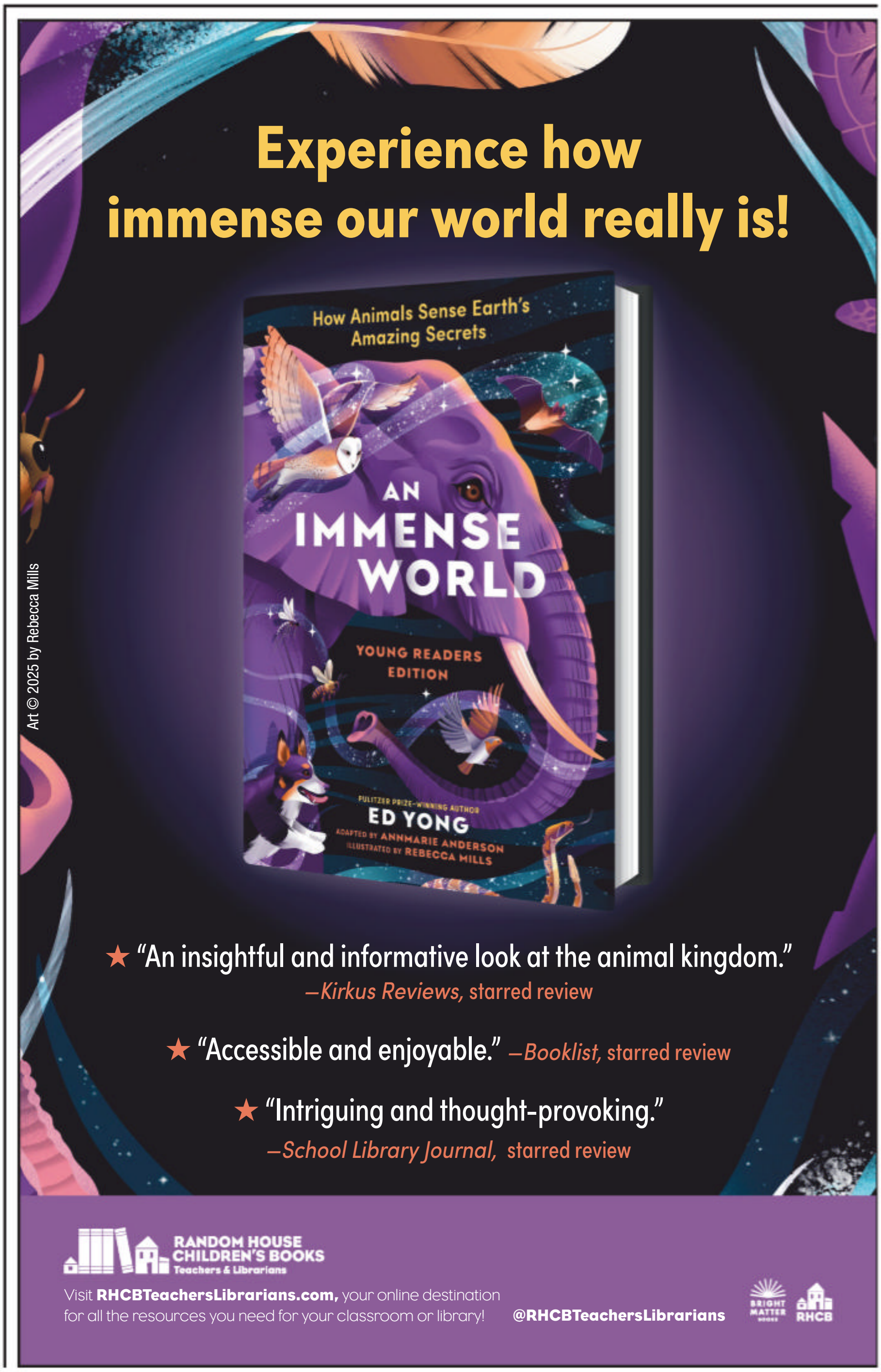
Wood brings the format of the wildly popular Ology series, which she created, to this enchanting collection of science experiments, all easily conducted at home. Science is the magic at work here, and Wood allows that idea to happily infuse the experience of using this book, which smoothly explains key science concepts while letting "wizardlings" utter incantations and wave ionically charged wands. The format and illustrations are what transform this offering into a certified kid magnet. Sturdy two-page spreads devoted to a particular topic are invitingly packed with flaps, mini pamphlets, and fold-out components that are robust and should easily stand up to repeated readings. Rioux's softly rendered illustrations star a pair of young wizards-in-training and their redheaded teacher, who conduct the experiments along with the reader, and the interactive components often present added information and depictions of the science in play. Experiments with states of matter, mixtures, solutions, and energy become opportunities to make potions, grow crystals, and vanish eggshells. A removable certificate at the book's end may need to be copied, as this training program will have many graduates. —*Julia Smith*

All About Antarctica: A Fact Book About the Southernmost Continent.

By Marc Martin. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 44p. Chronicle, $18.99 (9781797224695). Gr. 1–3. 919.89.

In the same omnium-gatherum vein that makes his globe-spanning *Everything & Everywhere* (2018) so much fun to browse, Martin focuses on our southernmost continent and fills every single-themed spread with dozens of small, captioned images. His topics range from large marine life and iceberg shapes to notable explorers and resident cats. Readers can peer into the continent's past and get a gander at the current ominous effects of climate change. He also portrays most of the eighty-some research stations currently operational and a comprehensive wardrobe for long-term visitors, including a swimsuit, flip-flops, and—for parties, maybe?—a penguin costume. Mandated environmental protection measures come up repeatedly: human visitors are not allowed to import soil for their indoor gardens, leave behind any food scraps or other waste, or even pee in the snow. Still, considering that over 100,000 tourists passed through in 2022–23 alone, he frets that damage is being done and closes with a suggestion



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that Antarctica be left to researchers—and, it goes unsaid, to armchair travelers who will pore over this enlightening, sometimes tongue-in-cheek album. —*John Peters*

All You Can Be with ADHD.

By Penn Holderness and Kim Holderness. Illus. by Vin Vogel.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Little, Brown, $19.99 (9780316597678). PreS–Gr. 1. 616.8589.

This bright, uplifting book will inspire and encourage young readers who may find themselves grappling with a new, confusing, and sometimes stressful diagnosis of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Vogel's delightful illustrations depict a large, vibrant, and diverse community of people with ADHD, from smiling children to famous scientists, athletes, and artists whom readers will recognize. The text's rhyming verse creates a memorable set of mantras, and the fun illustrations reinforce that not only are ADHD minds extremely capable but they are also imaginative and innovative, working in their own unique ways. Back matter notes from the creators lend a personal touch, accompanied by information about ADHD and tips and resources for those who might be interested in learning more. The book serves as a reminder that differences can and should be celebrated and that joining the global ADHD "club" of neurodivergent people can lead to many positive experiences and interactions. —*Stephanie Cohen Xu*

Electric Birds of Pothakudi.

By Karthika Naïr. Illus. by Joëlle Jolivet.

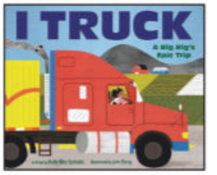
Oct. 2025. 52p. Abrams/Tate, $21.99 (9781849769150). K–Gr. 3. 598.

At first glance, the small Indian village of Pothakudi might not seem particularly exciting. It's a mishmash of thatched huts and shops, and most residents rely on the glow of 35 streetlamps to illuminate their nights. It's Raja who proudly maintains the power, manually flipping the switch when darkness falls, but his routine is upended when a pair of vannathikuruvi birds (white-browed wagtails) build a nest inside the switchboard. Raja is reluctant to disturb them, so he sets off through the streets to inform the residents of the issue, and while many agree to do without light for the sake of the prospective family, a few elders insist that the birds must be moved. Buoyed by the advice of a kind neighbor, Raja devises a clever plan to save the nest, ultimately bringing the village together in wonder of the unusual event. The beautiful book, a French import inspired by actual events, drops readers right into village life. Bold, black-lined illustrations are stylized and expressive, utilizing repeating patterns and dark colors to animate the setting and its human and avian inhabitants. Nighttime scenes are particularly striking, with small points of light glowing on the page. The absorbing text, combined with the arresting artwork, will easily appeal to a wide age range. A remarkable reminder that compassionately caring for the smallest things can bring the biggest rewards. —*Emily Graham*

I Truck: A Big Rig's Epic Trip.

By Kelly Rice Schmitt. Illus. by Jam Dong.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Lerner/Millbrook, $19.99 (9798765619827). K–Gr. 3. 629.224.



Following *I Ship* (2023) and *I Fuel* (2024), Schmitt and Dong hit the road with a red 18-wheeler traveling across the country. The truck, driven by a Black woman accompanied by her dog, narrates the journey, which begins as its trailer, filled with toys appealingly visible in a cutaway depiction, is attached. After completing a safety check, the rig is ready to make its deliveries. The illustrations, featuring bold colors, watercolor, and collage, present clear images perfect for conveying concepts to young readers.

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As the semi makes its way, several scenarios showcase the challenges of transporting goods across the country, such as weigh stations, difficult terrain, dangerous weather, weariness, and loneliness. Schmitt stresses the importance of getting the goods to their destination while keeping the tone fun by emphasizing onomatopoeic phrases (“*DING!*” “*HONK!*”) in large text. Kids enamored with large vehicles will revel in the facts and details worked into the text and illustrations, neither of which gets bogged down by its educational load. The book concludes with information about the importance of 18-wheelers in our lives and the national economy, as well as facts about the people who do this important job. Other back matter highlights include a fun “Trucker Talk” glossary that offers CB-radio jargon and a two-page diagram showing the parts of trucks. Expect this big rig to rack up serious circulation miles. —*Ana Menchaca*

I’m a Cloud.

By Tjitske Kamphuis. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Holt/Godwin, $18.99 (9781250360953).
PreS–Gr. 2. 551.57.

Animals in different habitats go about their days as the smiling clouds above them address the reader. Each spread highlights a different type of cloud, which describes itself in a sentence or two per page of straightforward language (“like a mountain” or “like a big, heavy blanket”), focusing on colors and shapes. Simple observations about the role clouds play in weather are mentioned lightly, while back matter provides a few basic facts about where clouds come from and why they vary. For eager learners, the scientific name of each cloud type—cumulus congestus, nimbostratus—is woven into its illustration, and one spread shows the all clouds together for easy comparison. The unpretentious illustrations in muted tones have a painted look, featuring friendly cloud narrators and a nice array of wilderness settings. Readers who want a fuller explanation of the water cycle may want to look elsewhere, but this is a pleasant, inviting introduction for young scientists just starting a closer observation of the skies. —*Elisha Brookover*

Rock Star: How Ursula Marvin Mapped Rocks and Meteorites.

By Sandra Neil Wallace. Illus. by Nancy Carpenter.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman, $19.99 (9781534493339). Gr. 1–3. 520.92.

Hailing her subject’s rise to scientific prominence as destiny (“She was meant to explore,” goes a recurrent line), Wallace salutes the spirit and achievements of planetary geologist Marvin, who brushed past overt gender barriers not only to earn her academic credentials but also to venture repeatedly into the depths of Antarctica in search of meteorites. Using X-rays (a first, the author claims) to analyze the mineral composition of meteorites and moon rocks, Marvin became such an authority in that field before dying in 2018 at the age of 96 that an Antarctic ridge, an asteroid, and a crater on the moon have been named after her. Carpenter depicts her smiling and self-assured, first as an outdoorsy Vermont child, then in a college class (the only woman), later studying lunar rocks fetched by Apollo astronauts, driving a snowmobile through the Transantarctic Mountains, and at last reaching for tantalizing chunks of glittering rocks and minerals floating in space. The back matter includes photos, a timeline, and a generous set of sources and resources, along with general facts about the fifth-largest continent. —*John Peters*

Salmon Run: An Epic Journey to the Ocean and Back Again.

By Annie Chen. Illus. by the author.

Nov. 2025. 38p. Red Comet, $19.99 (9781636551654).
K–Gr. 3. 597.55.

Chen vividly captures the incredible life cycle of a coho salmon in the Pacific Northwest in this inviting, warmly illustrated primer. Each double-page spread marks a different phase in the journey, from fragile egg to determined adult returning home to spawn. Chen’s text is clear and accessible for young readers, yet rich enough to spark deeper conversation. The rhythm of the language mirrors the salmon’s persistent movement, and the narrative never shies away from the peril involved in survival. With luminescent watercolor artwork that beautifully complements the text, the book invites readers to marvel at both the science and the poetry of nature. The back matter includes a heartfelt author’s note, in which Chen shares her personal connection to the Pacific salmon, enhancing the book’s emotional resonance. It also offers additional information about coho salmon and the species’ life cycle to extend learning. A valuable resource for science instruction on animal life cycles and an excellent choice for any library looking to enrich its nonfiction collection on wildlife. —*Marie Langevin*

Small Mighty Dung Beetle.

By Mary Auld. Illus. by Hannah Bailey.

Nov. 2025. 28p. Red Comet, $15.99 (9781636551678).
K–Gr. 3. 595.762.

Roll up! Roll up! Meet a shimmering green *Garreta nitens* beetle and watch as she gathers in a mate to help shape and bury a ball of fresh elephant dung with an egg planted inside, then scurries off to continue her essential ecological work by finding—or stealing, if the opportunity presents itself—more balls of nourishing poop to plant. Bailey sticks largely to the African savanna for her above- and below-ground scenes, but as a life-size gallery of poop-munching insect cousins and a fold-out poster map make clear, dung beetles are busy balling up waste and reproducing in it on every continent except Antarctica. Cutaway views of underground larval development offer further insights into the life cycle of these near-ubiquitous recyclers, and just for fun (and review), a “Serengeti I-Spy” at the end invites young readers to go back to spot distinctive birds and beasts in previous illustrations. —*John Peters*

To the Top of the World: Barbara Hillary, the First Black Woman to Reach the North and South Poles.

By Deborah Blumenthal. Illus. by Anastasia Magloire Williams.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Atheneum, $19.99 (9781665927734).
K–Gr. 3. 796.09.

With a supportive mother and a fiercely determined mindset, “Barbara Hillary lived in a world of *you can,* not *you can’t.*” Her age (75), health (a double cancer survivor with reduced lung capacity), and the fact that her heroes didn’t look like her didn’t quell Barbara’s enthusiasm. “She would be the adventurer she never saw in her childhood books.” Training, fundraising, and building the snow skills she’d need, Barbara determinedly honed her preparedness for the arduous trek first to the North Pole, following in trailblazing Matthew Henson’s footsteps, and later venturing to the South Pole. Barbara’s perseverance and enthusiasm shine through admiring text and joyful digital portraiture that captures her icy accomplishments as well as the global environmental advocacy that came in their wake. A great fit for women’s history enthusiasts and young adventurers, this celebratory biography offers welcome representation of an older Black woman in the wilderness and reminds readers of all ages that it’s never too late to dream big dreams and chase them. —*Kit Ballenger*

When Science Stood Still: How S. Chandrasekhar Predicted the Existence of Black Holes.

By Shruthi Rao. Illus. by Srinidhi Srinivasan.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry, $19.99 (9781665949965). Gr. 1–3. 520.92.

This inviting picture book tells the remarkable story of Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar and his groundbreaking theory on black holes. The inquisitive nature of Chandrasekhar is evident from an early age, when he takes “an idea from here and an equation from there” to find solutions. While the scientist’s ideas were celebrated in India, they were initially dismissed in England. Despite the rejection, he continued his scientific work, earning acclaim even as “the science of stars stood still.” The narrative highlights how scientific progress can be delayed by bias and resistance. Vibrant, dynamic illustrations accompany this turbulent journey of scientific innovation and the perseverance it demands. The back matter enriches the story with additional context about Chandrasekhar, black holes, and their surprising connection to the atomic bomb, as well as his complex relationship with Sir Arthur Eddington. This book offers a powerful message about resilience and belief in one’s work despite opposition. A compelling and necessary addition to any library, especially for readers seeking space biographies that spotlight the contributions of underrepresented scientists. —*Marie Langevin*

Spotlight on **Series Nonfiction**

Art from Speedy Falcons.

Older Readers

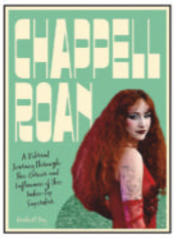
Air and Space.
By Anne O'Daly.
2025. 64p. illus. Brown Bear, lib. ed., $33.95 (9781835720608). Gr. 7–12. 387.73.

This graphics-rich STEM gem offers a quick overview of notable developments in human flight, from ancient times through modern day with nods toward the future. Part of the Key Concepts: STEM Engineering and Technology series (6 titles), its pages are filled with inviting spreads of engaging, straightforward reporting supported by numerous sidebars, definitions of technical vocabulary, lists, captioned photos, illustrations, diagrams, a timeline (1783–2024), glossary, and additional resources. The narrative unfolds in chronological order and fills in historic and political context, emphasizing instances in which advances were built on previous technologies. There are also references to how air and space innovations translate into earthbound everyday life (remote-controlled pacemakers and heart pumps, communication satellites). Filled with solid information, famous firsts, and facts, this will appeal to space nerds, researchers, and browsers. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Be a Veterinary Technician.
By Cynthia Kennedy Henzel.
2025. 64p. illus. ReferencePoint/BrightPoint, lib. ed., $33.95 (9781678211264). Gr. 6–10. 636.089.

This high/low title from the In-Demand Careers series (5 titles) opens with bullet points previewing the book's major topics and an overview of the vet-tech profession. Engaging vignettes of the tasks and settings involved in this work are conveyed through clear language and images (including many adorable animals) that showcase experiences at clinics, shelters, farms, and zoos. Perspectives on the exciting, mundane, and heartbreaking aspects of working with animals are communicated throughout. Details on schooling, certification requirements, and the career's employment outlook make this a practical guide for those considering this profession. In addition to descriptions of specialties and current information on salary, the book emphasizes the importance of soft skills like communication and empathy. Appropriate for middle-schoolers, teens reading below grade level, and anyone interested in animal-related careers. —*Deidre Winterhalter*

★ Chappell Roan.
By Harbert Day.
Oct. 2025. 208p. illus. Quarto/Epic Ink, lib. ed., $19.99 (9780760399279). Gr. 7–12. 781.64092.

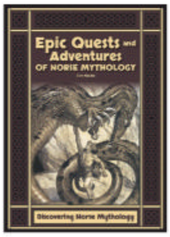


Before she was a well-known sapphic indie-pop sensation, Chappell Roan was Kayleigh Rose Amstutz of Willard, Missouri. Detailed in this volume of the Fierce and Fearless series (2 titles) is the rise of the Midwest princess and all that went into her musical journey. The biography is supplemented by quotes from several interviews and profiles, capturing the challenges Roan faced when starting off in the music industry, her struggle with a record deal gone wrong, and eventually finding her stride with a great team of creatives on her side. The biography features several fantastic photographs, capturing Roan's girly, exuberant style and noting specific events where the fits were featured. Day doesn't shy away from expletives as she tackles the meteoric rise of Roan, but they feel contextually appropriate for all the challenges Roan faced. The work concludes with Chappell Roan's discography, as well as citations to sources and photo credits. The biography is well executed, taking both casual readers and researchers interested in the pop princess on a hot-to-go journey through her early career. —*Kelly Ferreira*

Chef.
By Cathleen Small.
2025. 64p. illus. Cheriton, lib. ed., $25.99 (9781917187367). Gr. 6–10. 641.5.

Though a slim volume, this work packs very useful information into busy pages filled with realistic and helpful counsel. The content incorporates real-world scenarios, including interviews and photos of working professionals who cheerfully share their expertise. Part of the Practical Careers for Practical People series (6 titles; other titles address hands-on jobs such as carpenter, auto mechanic, and cosmetologist), its pages are filled with job and workplace descriptions, training and preparation options, current job market and future demand predictions, profiles of groundbreaking chefs (Pinky Cole, Christina Tosi), career paths and alternative culinary pursuits (e.g., pitmasters, food-truck entrepreneurs, recipe creators), and current concerns including sustainability, workplace health and wellness, and the impact of AI. The inviting, user-friendly layout offers well-sized columns of text, numerous sidebars and graphics, and rich back matter. A helpful addition to career collections. —*Kathleen McBroom*

★ Epic Quests and Adventures of Norse Mythology.
By Don Nardo.
2025. 64p. illus. ReferencePoint, lib. ed., $33.95 (9781678210328). Gr. 8–12. 398.20948.


Epic Quests and Adventures of Norse Mythology
Discovering Norse Mythology

Mythology books have long been a staple of nonfiction collections in libraries, and in recent years, these collections have become more inclusive of countries and cultures beyond the borders of the classics: ancient Greece and Rome. As a historian and a writer, Nardo has a wide-ranging knowledge of history and a talent for engaging middle-grade and young adult readers with both historical and mythological stories. In this volume, he presents a series of centuries-old Norse myths, describing the sometimes courageous, sometimes ignoble acts of gods and heroes. At times, he comments on whether certain myths were inspired by people and events in Nordic history; Vikings are mentioned frequently. The illustrations are dramatic paintings, reminiscent of the Romantic movement in European art. This well-researched, very readable volume is one of the five books that Nardo has written for the Discovering Norse Mythology series (5 titles). This book further broadens the availability and enjoyment of mythology books for readers intrigued by dramatic adventure stories in general and Norse myths in particular. —*Carolyn Phelan*

The Florida Keys.
By Pam Berkman.
2025. 112p. illus. ABDO/Essential Library, lib. ed., $29.95 (9781098297084). Gr. 6–10. 917.594.

This comprehensive book in the Essential Travel Guides series (6 titles) transports readers to the sunny Florida Keys with a blend of history, ecology, and travel appeal. Berkman covers everything from prehistoric settlements and Spanish colonization to shipwrecks, iconic bridges, and coral reefs. Colorful maps, historical photos, and informative sidebars enrich chapters organized by region, from Key Largo to Key West. Spotlights include information on landmarks, wildlife, and ecotourism, as well as sections on the Overseas Railroad, coral nursery conservation efforts, and the unique ecosystems of Biscayne and Dry Tortugas National Parks. Information about the Seminole people and environmental threats like hurricanes and climate change adds meaningful context. Ending with a glossary, an index, and online resources, this invit-

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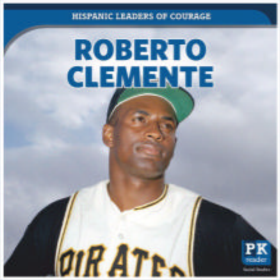
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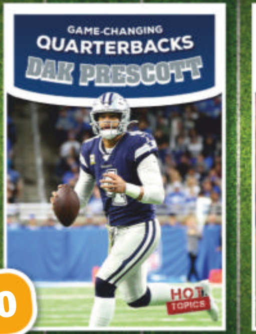
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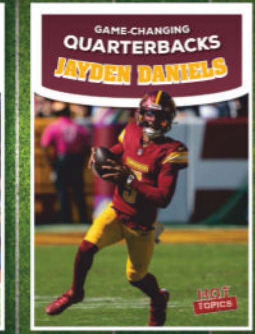
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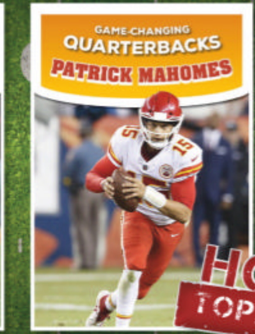
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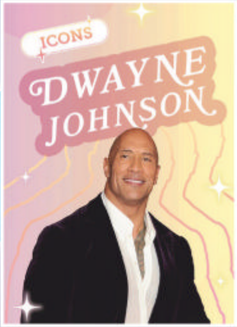
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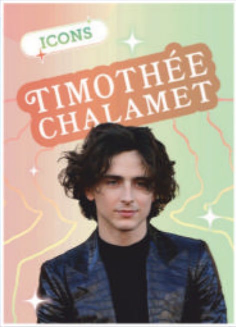
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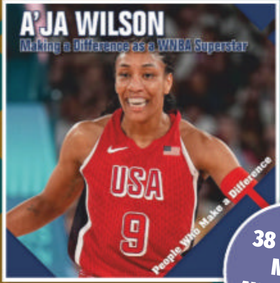
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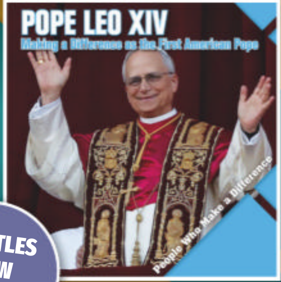
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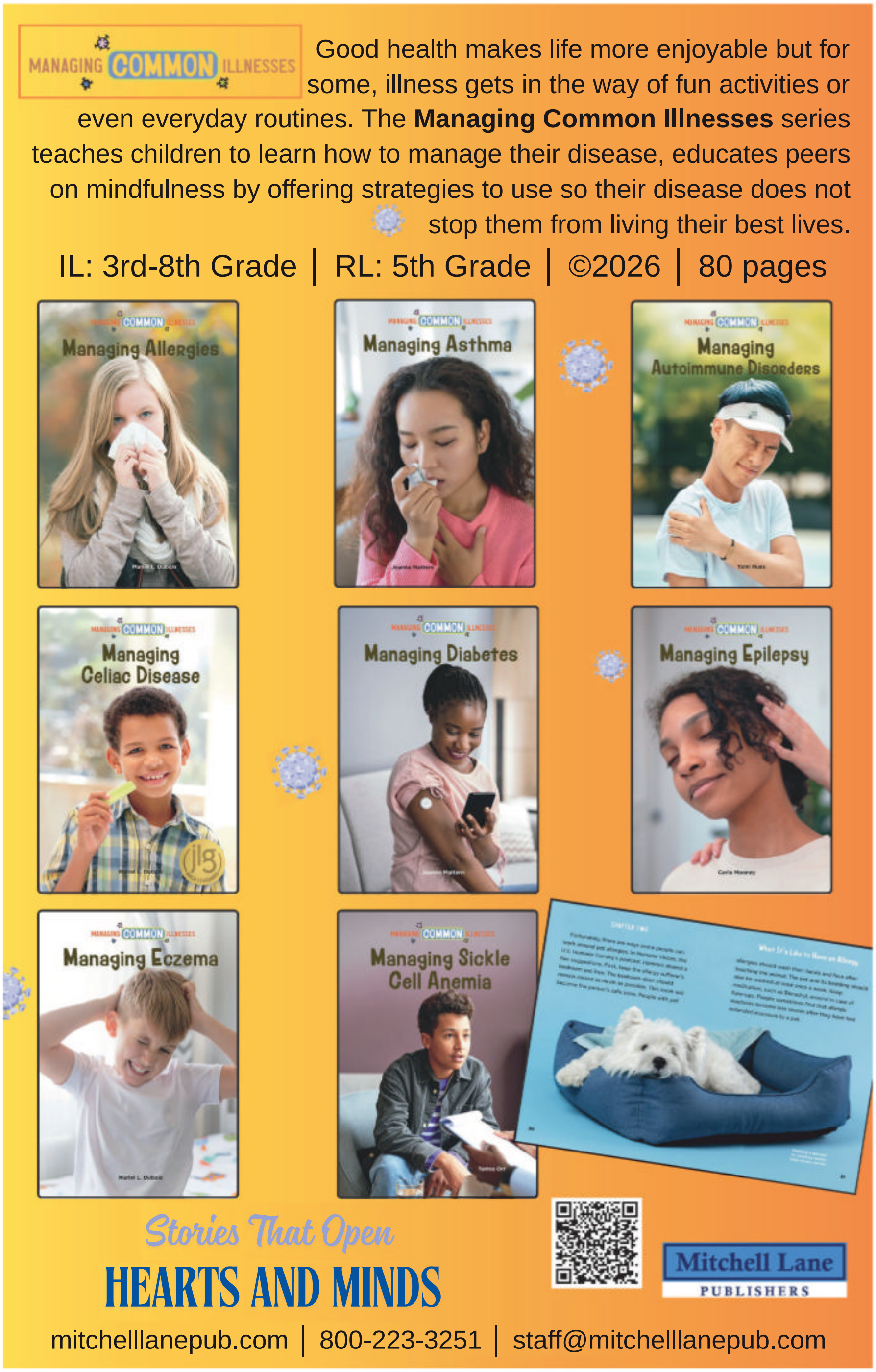
THE ROSEN PUBLISHING GROUP | Call 800-237-9932 to Order | All titles available as eBooks. epointplus ing travelogue will be a useful research tool for classroom use and for casual browsers. *—Aurora Dominguez*

Kangaroos.

By Melissa Gish.

2025. 80p. illus. Creative Company/Creative Education, lib. ed., $35.95 (9798889896579). Gr. 7–12. 599.2.

The Odysseys in the Wild series (12 titles) fills a gap by gearing its animal profiles to an older audience. As can be expected from the Odyssey line, the text goes into a decent amount of depth while maintaining a visually pleasing reading experience by implementing wide margins and numerous high-quality photos. Here, readers meet six species of kangaroo in addition to fellow macropods, the wallaby and tree kangaroo. Roughly half the book is devoted to the kangaroo itself, rattling off facts and stats about the general characteristics and species-specific differences, as well as kangaroo social structure. The book's second half explores the relationship between this animal and humans, looking at its cultural significance, divisive practices (culling for population management and commercial markets), conservation efforts, and scientific research. A big-picture look at an iconic creature. *—Julia Smith*



Good health makes life more enjoyable but for some, illness gets in the way of fun activities or even everyday routines. The **Managing Common Illnesses** series teaches children to learn how to manage their disease, educates peers on mindfulness by offering strategies to use so their disease does not stop them from living their best lives.

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Middle Readers

12 Questions About Artificial Intelligence.

By Marne Ventura.

2025. 48p. illus. Black Rabbit/Top Rank, lib. ed., $30.95 (9781644668146). Gr. 4–7. 006.3.

This examination of artificial intelligence, part of the Tech Smarts series (6 titles), offers solid information presented in a pleasing, graphic-rich format. Each of the 12 chapters poses a question about a specific aspect of AI that is then addressed via a straightforward narrative supported by sidebars offering quick facts, definitions, and statistics with brief annotations. Initial sections set historical context for robots, algorithms, and chatbots, while subsequent chapters touch upon student research concerns, such as "How is AI helpful to people?" Other topics investigate the pros and cons of AI, safety guidelines, laws, and future uses. Back matter includes an additional reminder about safe use, a glossary, and sources for additional information. There's an overall emphasis on how schools and teachers can use AI to help students, making this attractive to both kids and adults. *—Kathleen McBroom*

ACL Tears.

By India James.

2025. 48p. illus. Crabtree/Forest, lib. ed., $24.95 (9781039880795). Gr. 4–8. 617.1.

Understanding one's anatomy is a key component of staying healthy, particularly for athletes. This entry in the Sports Injuries series (4 titles) gives a comprehensive breakdown of the knee—with diagrams labeling its bones, muscles, tendons, and ligaments, in addition to the knee's relation to the hip joint—while discussing circumstances surrounding ACL injuries. Clearly written chapters lay out what the ACL is (a knee ligament), how it is likely to be injured, degrees of injury (strains versus tears and avulsions), common treatments, and preventative measures. The informative, concise text is well organized and balanced with the pages' white space and illustrations. Readers will acquire a solid understanding of what to expect should they hurt their ACLs and will glean tips to help avoid such injuries. A relevant resource for athletes and those interested in sports medicine. *—Julia Smith*

Bog Bodies.

By Trudy Becker.

2025. 32p. illus. North Star/Apex, lib. ed., $21.95 (9798892505307). Gr. 2–4. 930.

This fascinating title introduces readers to the mysterious world of preserved human remains found in peat bogs. The text explains how these ancient bodies were discovered, how they were preserved for hundreds to thousands of years, and what scientists have learned from studying them. Readers will be fascinated to learn how scientists are able to investigate the bog bodies and see what they ate, wore, and how they possibly passed (like

Continued on p.74

Spanish Series Nonfiction Preview: Fall 2025

The following nonfiction series, both new and continuing, mark the season's newest releases available in Spanish. —*Julia Smith*

New Series

Ayudantes de la comunidad (Spot Community Helpers). Amicus Learning. Individual titles, lib. ed., $21.95. PreS–Gr. 2. (8 titles)

Biografías: Líderes del mundo (Leading Biographies). ABDO/Kids Junior. Individual titles, lib. ed., $23.95. PreS–Gr. 2. (6 titles)

Celebramos que somos tú y yo con Sesame Street® (Sesame Street® Celebrating You and Me). Lerner/ediciones Lerner. Individual titles, lib. ed., $20.99. PreS–Gr. 2. (6 titles)

Conoce a los caballos (Meet the Horses). Jump!/Bullfrog. Individual titles, lib. ed., $20.99. K–Gr. 3. (6 titles)

Creative Sports: Ganadores de la Copa del Mundo (Creative Sports: World Cup Winners). The Creative Company/Creative Education. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. Gr. 1–4. (8 titles)

Creative Sports: Historias del Super Bowl de la NFL (Creative Sports: NFL Super Bowl Stories). The Creative Company/Creative Education. Individual titles, lib. ed., $25.95. Gr. 3–6. (6 titles)

Creative Sports: Miembros del Salón de la Fama de la NFL (Creative Sports: NFL Hall of Famers). The Creative Company/Creative Education. Individual titles, lib. ed., $25.95. Gr. 3–6. (6 titles)

Cuento vs. realidad (Tale vs. Truth). Amicus Learning. Individual titles, lib. ed., $25.95. Gr. 1–4. (6 titles)

Curiosidad por la programación (Curious About Coding). Amicus Learning. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. Gr. 1–4. (4 titles)

Curiosidad por los tiburones (Curious About Sharks). Amicus Learning. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. Gr. 1–4. (8 titles)

Deportistas que marcaron una diferencia (Athletes Who Made a Difference). Lerner/Graphic Universe. Individual titles, lib. ed., $22.99. Gr. 3–6. (6 titles)

Libritos mariposa (Little Butterfly Books). Cherry Lake/Cherry Blossom. Individual titles, paper, $7.95. PreS–Gr. 2. (8 titles)

Mascotas inusuales (Unusual Pets). Black Rabbit/Bolt. Individual titles, lib. ed., $25.95. Gr. 4–6. (6 titles)

Migraciones increíbles (Incredible Migrations). Amicus Learning. Individual titles, lib. ed., $25.95. Gr. K–3. (6 titles)

Por qué nos gustan los deportes (Why We Love Sports). Black Rabbit/Top Rank. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. Gr. 2–3. (8 titles)

Revolución de los deportes electrónicos (Esport Revolution). Black Rabbit/Bolt. Individual titles, lib. ed., $25.95. Gr. 4–6. (6 titles)

Salvados de la extinción (Back from the Brink). Black Rabbit/Top Rank. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. Gr. 2–3. (6 titles)

Vehículos motorizados (Spot Motorsports). Amicus Learning. Individual titles, lib. ed., $21.95. PreS–Gr. 2. (6 titles)

Veo, veo un animal (I'm Thinking of an Animal). ABDO/Kids Junior. Individual titles, lib. ed., $22.95. PreS–Gr. 2. (6 titles)

La vida en el océano (Ocean Life). Black Rabbit/Bolt Jr. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. K–Gr. 3. (6 titles)

Continuing Series (New Installments)

Amazing Animals. The Creative Company/Creative Education. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. Gr. 1–4. (8 titles)

¡Brrrum! (Vroom!). Jump!/Bullfrog. Individual titles, lib. ed., $20.99. K–Gr. 3. (6 titles)

Curiosidad por las marcas favoritas (Curious About Favorite Brands). Amicus Learning. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. Gr. 1–4. (6 titles)

Un foco en la naturaleza (Spotlight on Nature). The Creative Company/Creative Education. Individual titles, lib. ed., $26.95. Gr. 4–7. (12 titles)

iCivics Readers (Spanish). Teacher Created Materials. Individual titles, paper, $12.99. Gr. 5–8. (3 titles)

Inspirar (Inspire). Amicus Learning. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. Gr. 1–4. (8 titles)

Juegos Olímpicos de Invierno increíbles (Amazing Winter Olympics). The Creative Company/Creative Education. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. Gr. 1–4. (8 titles)

Maravillas (Marvels). The Creative Company/Creative Education. Individual titles, lib. ed., $24.95. K–Gr. 1. (18 titles)

Mi mini biografía (My Itty-Bitty Bio). Cherry Lake. Individual titles, lib. ed., $22.45. K–Gr. 1. (16 titles)

Países, set 3 (Countries, set 3). ABDO/Kids Junior. Individual titles, lib. ed., $23.95. PreS–Gr. 2 (6 titles)

Pasaporte mundial (World Passport). Capstone. Individual titles, lib. ed., $23.49. Gr. 3–5. (4 titles)

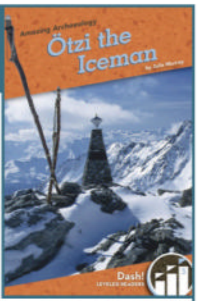
El principio de los (Starting Out). The Creative Company/Creative Education. Individual titles, lib. ed., $21.95. PreS–Gr. 2. (15 titles)

Social Studies: Informational Text (Spanish). Teacher Created Materials. Individual titles, paper, $11.99. Gr. 4–8. (11 titles)

Tradiciones y celebraciones (Traditions & Celebrations). Capstone/Pebble. Individual titles, lib. ed., $23.49. K–Gr. 3. (4 titles)

Vidas secretas de críptidos (Secret Lives of Cryptids). Capstone. Individual titles, lib. ed., $23.49. Gr. 4–6. (6 titles)

Top 10 Series on Ancient Civilizations



What's old is made new and fresh in these 10 outstanding series about ancient civilizations. —*Angela Leeper*

Amazing Archaeology (ABDO/AbdoZoom; 6 titles)
K–Gr. 3. King Tut's Tomb, Pompeii, and Machu Picchu are some of the archaeological sites featured in these early readers. In double-page spreads, beautiful, full-page photos and a short paragraph of text explain the background of each ancient site and how it was discovered.

Ancient Warriors (Crabtree; 6 titles)
Gr. 3–8. High/low text in a larger font relates the history of such ancient warriors as gladiators, samurai, Vikings, and Spartans, touching upon their clothing, weapons, training, fighting style, and daily life. Bold photos of real men and women incorporate these details in dramatic, action-packed reenactments.

Ancient Worlds (Cherry Lake/45th Parallel; 6 titles)
Gr. 4–7. Ancient civilizations are considered through the lens of such lively topics as early social media, infamous tyrants, and surviving natural disasters. In each book, examples from a range of civilizations are described in a few pages of high/low text with accompanying photos.

Baffling Behavior in the Past (Bearport/Roar!; 4 titles)
Gr. 3–7. From Viking runes to public toilets in Rome, each volume in this high/low series contains a hodgepodge of short cultural facts (with a few bathing- and bathroom-related tidbits for extra fun). Large photos and reproductions lend to the books' browsability.

Historical Ages (ABDO/Core Library; 6 titles)
Gr. 4–8. This detailed, well-researched series focuses on archaeological periods of ancient peoples, such as the Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Paleo-Indian Period. The emphasis is on how archaeologists study these peoples through artifacts, making discoveries and developing theories about how they lived.

Secrets of Ancient Civilizations (Capstone; 4 titles)
Gr. 3–5. Each entry in this high-interest series is dedicated to a specific archaeological site in Egypt, including the Great Pyramid of Giza, the city of Luxor, Cleopatra's tomb, and sites related to pharaohs. Numerous visuals enhance this blend of background information and scientific research.

Technology Through the Ages (Lerner/Twenty-First Century; 8 titles)
Gr. 6–10. This series takes a topical approach (e.g., communication, machines, and transportation) as it considers technology in ancient civilizations. Each chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the featured subject in relation to a specific ancient civilization, from Rome to Egypt to India to Mesopotamia.

That's Ancient! (Gareth Stevens; 6 titles)
Gr. 4–6. Paper, toothpaste, and calendars are just some of the ancient (but still relevant) inventions celebrated by this series. Each volume features an individual civilization and uses short segments with accompanying photos to spotlight how each innovation was developed.

Uncover History (Rosen/PowerKids; 6 titles)
Gr. 4–6. Prehistoric ages and ancient civilizations are introduced in an engaging format that combines Q&A text, including lesser-known facts and jokes, and graphic-novel elements for an accessible trip back in time.

You Choose: Ancient Empires and Civilizations (Capstone; 4 titles)
Gr. 3–5. In this interactive series, readers (called "You") navigate life as a figure—e.g., a merchant, a scribe, a tax collector—in the Aztec, Maya, Indus, and Rapa Nui civilizations. Along the way, readers learn details about daily life and society.

Continued from p.72

the Tollund Man found in Denmark and his last supper of porridge and fish). Vivid photos and helpful features such as sidebars and fast facts support understanding and encourage curiosity. Making complex historical and scientific content accessible and engaging, this is a great choice for readers interested in history, archaeology, or just cool, creepy facts from the past. —*Alana Jara*

★ Book Bans: Reading Under Siege.
By Sally McGraw.

2025. 48p. illus. Lerner, lib. ed., $24.99 (9798765669396). Gr. 4–8. 098.10973.

With library and school book bans in the news, students may wish to learn more about the rationale, history, legalities, and impacts of this hot-button topic. The accessible text and inclusion of historical images and sources demonstrate that book banning is not a new phenomenon, with the first recorded event in this book's timeline dating back to 212 BCE. Chapters explore banning as a product of fear, censorship, government involvement and court cases (including discussions of the Scopes Trial, 1925; *Board of Education v. Pico*, 1982; and First Amendment rights), and efforts to fight book bans. Special sections highlight areas of interest ("Famous Banned Books," "Book Bans That Were Overturned," "Why Are Children's Books Banned More Often? "How to Fight Book Bans," and "How Book Bans Affect Students' Mental Health and Well-Being"), providing information succinctly with the use of bold font and bullet points. While this timely Gateway Headlines series (4 titles) offering is aimed at upper-elementary and middle-school students, older readers will also find it edifying. —*Beth McGuire*

BOOK BANS
Reading Under Siege
Sally McGraw
Lerner

★ A Career in Architectural Design.
By Nancy Coffelt.

2025. 48p. illus. Mitchell Lane, lib. ed., $28 (9798892604994). Gr. 3–7. 720.1.

From the Art and Design Careers series (8 titles), this attractive volume begins with several fictional scenes: Jasmine and her classmates arrive at one of America's most famous buildings, Fallingwater, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built into a waterfall. During their tour, it occurs to Jasmine—who loves to draw—that some artistic people design houses for a living and that she wants to become one of them. The book introduces a wide variety of related topics that architects and architectural students must consider. These include the building's foundation,

A Career in
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN
Nancy Coffelt

Continued on p.78

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?!

UNCOVER YOUR BRAIN CANDY ALTER EGO USING THIS FORMULA:

First Letter of Your First Name
+ Your Birth Month
= Your **BRAIN CANDY NAME**

FIRST LETTER OF YOUR NAME

A: Brainy
B: Disturbing
C: Cosmic
D: Gross
E: Electric
F: Snotty
G: Glowing
H: Fascinating
I: Paranormal
J: Cringey
K: Fearless
L: Legendary
M: Slimy
N: Outrageous
O: Neon
P: Nasty
Q: Quirky
R: Celestial
S: Mysterious
T: Weird
U: Rainbow
V: Sweet
W: Explosive
X: Chaotic
Y: Vivid
Z: Random

YOUR BIRTH MONTH

JAN: Kitty
FEB: Popstar
MAR: Dinosaur
APR: Worm
MAY: Legend
JUNE: Athlete
JUL: Capybara
AUG: Zombie
SEP: Olympian
OCT: Skeleton
NOV: Moonbeam
DEC: Alien

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Info Fanatic
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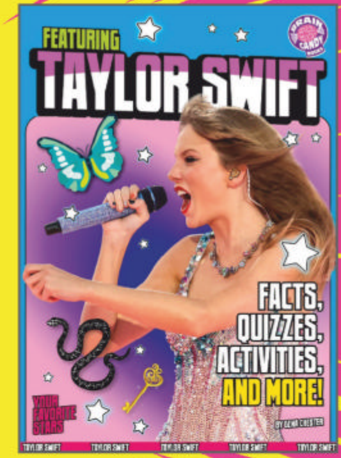
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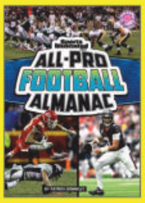
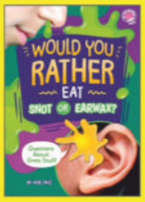
FACTS, QUIZZES, ACTIVITIES, AND MORE!
YOUR FAVORITE STARS


ALL-PRO FOOTBALL ALMANAC

Everything Sports Almanacs
9798875232749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EAT SNOT OR EARWAX?

Would You Rather
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Your Favorite Stars
9798875233258

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NEW from capstone®

ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS IN SERIES NONFICTION

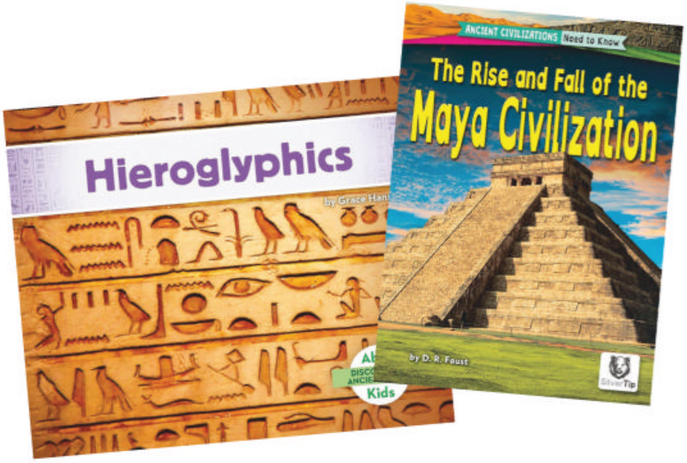
by Angela Leeper

Ancient doesn't have to mean dusty, boring facts when it comes to learning about past civilizations. Series nonfiction publishers offer young readers a variety of engaging approaches and perspectives when exploring the life, cultures, and locales of ancient peoples.

Reliable Overviews

A few series, like ABDO's Discovering Ancient Egypt for younger elementary readers, focus on a specific ancient civilization, with individual titles dedicated to specific areas of ancient Egyptian culture, such as art, pharaohs, pyramids, and gods and goddesses. In *Hieroglyphics* (2024), double-page spreads with a paragraph of text and a full-page illustration explain the role of scribes, their writing surfaces and tools, and how hieroglyphic symbols work.

Many more series, however, comprise several civilizations, giving each a rounded overview in its own volume. Bearport's Ancient Civilizations: Need to Know middle-grade series for high/low readers is a good example, with volumes on Mesopotamia, ancient Rome, ancient China, and more. *The Rise and Fall of the Maya Civilization* (2024) introduces geography, architecture, religion, leaders, and other cultural elements as it unfolds chronologically, progressing from the establishment of farms and villages to the rise of city-states and a golden age of technological advancements and then turning to the Spanish invasion of the region and the civilization's decline. Enslow's Ancient Civilizations in Review series works similarly but is written at a slightly higher reading level.


Hieroglyphics
by Grace Hansen
Kids
Ancient Civilizations Need to Know
The Rise and Fall of the Maya Civilization
by D. R. Faust
SilverTip

Cavendish Square's Unearthing Ancient Civilizations series also takes this approach, but its denser text allows for more in-depth explorations of its topics. *Ancient Mesopotamia Revealed* (2022) expands on archaeological research and delivers a more comprehensive reason why this area has been called "the cradle of civilization." A concluding "History Happened Here" section expands on archaeological sites with more visuals and facts. For younger elementary students, Jump!'s Ancient Civilizations series introduces foundational information about daily life and culture in ancient China, Egypt, Rome, and more. Employing short, simple passages and large, colorful digital illustrations, *A Day in Ancient Greece* (2025) describes government, religion, markets, farming, and theater as well as differences in education and pastimes available to boys and girls of the time.

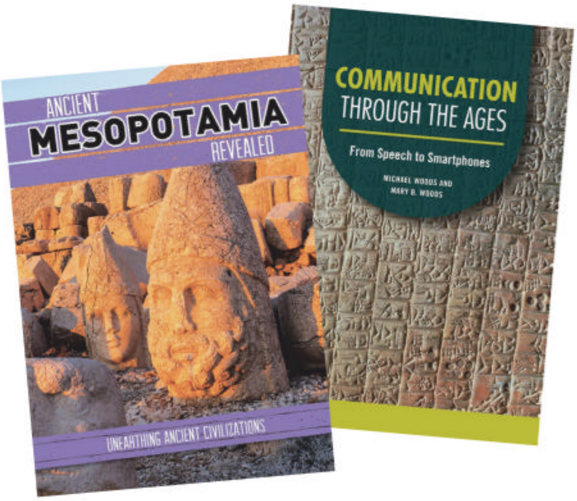
Baffling Behavior in the Past
ROAR!
Life in Ancient Rome
by Noah Leatherland
X-treme Facts: Ancient History
Ancient China
by Catherine C. Finan

Focus on Curiosities & Fun(ny) Facts

Other series dish up history with a healthy serving of humor or in accordance with an off-beat theme. Eschewing standard cultural topics, Bearport's high/low Baffling Behavior in the Past series, for middle-grade readers, spotlights unusual facts associated with the Vikings as well as inhabitants of ancient Rome, Greece, and Egypt. For instance, *Life in Ancient Rome* (2025) presents practices of the time that seem odd by today's standards, such as treating a headache with cabbage and having open public toilets (that also run the risk of having rats, snakes, and even fire come out of them!). Another series from Bearport, X-treme Facts: Ancient History, interjects strange facts as well as sight and speech gags when explaining daily life and culture in ancient civilizations to upper elementary students. When *Ancient China* (2021) describes the Great Wall, for example, it also humorously notes how some people believe it's haunted and that some tourists think its mortar was made with sticky rice.

Focus on Innovations

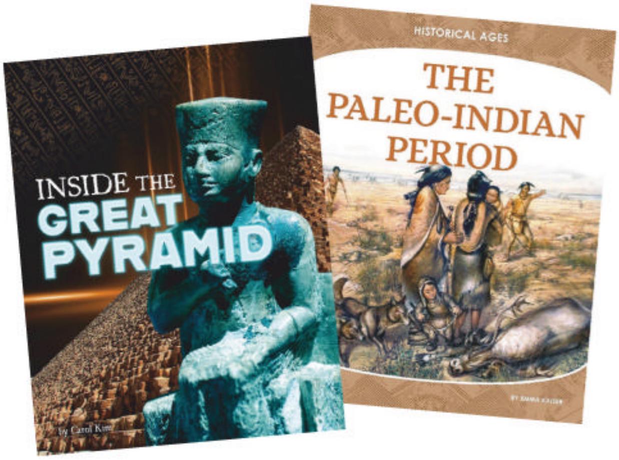
Because many of today's technologies were conceptualized or created hundreds of years ago, some series center on innovations. Gareth Steven's That's Ancient! series, for middle-grade readers, features books on individual ancient civilizations (e.g., China, Egypt, the Americas) that introduce significant inventions via double-page spreads containing a few paragraphs of text and photos. One of these volumes, *The Advances of Ancient Mesopotamia* (2022), explains the revolutionary developments of cuneiform writing, measuring time in units, and the calendar. Lerner's more detailed Technology Through the Ages series, for middle- and high-school students, covers these advances differ-


ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA REVEALED
UNEARTHING ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS
COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE AGES
From Speech to Smartphones
MICHAEL WOODS AND MARY B. WOODS

ently. Each volume is dedicated to a specific topic in technology, such as agriculture, computing, medicine, and transportation. Individual chapters look at the technology in relation to specific ancient civilizations. While *Communication Through the Ages* (2025) discusses cuneiform writing in Mesopotamia, it also investigates hieroglyphics in Egypt, Sanskrit literature in India, and papermaking in China.

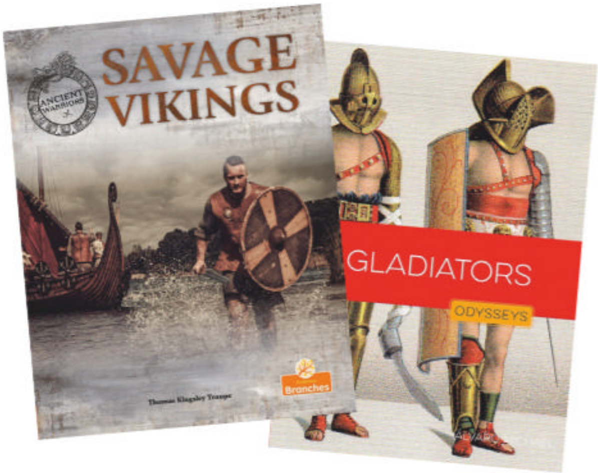
Focus on Archaeology

Ancient civilizations and archaeology go hand in hand, so it makes perfect sense to have series driven by this relationship, as seen in Capstone's Secrets of Ancient Civilizations, for upper elementary students. Each installment is dedicated to a specific archaeological site in Egypt, including Cleopatra's tomb and the city of Luxor, blending background information on ancient Egypt, scientific research, and numerous visuals for reference. *Inside the Great Pyramid* (2025), for instance, first explains the construction and use of pyramids and then reveals archaeological discoveries made inside the Great Pyramid of Giza. ABDO's detailed Historical Ages series, for middle-grade readers, also considers how archaeology has influenced what we know about ancient civilizations. It's significantly different in content from other series, focusing on archaeological periods of ancient peoples, such as the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages. *The Paleo-Indian Period* (2025) looks at how archeologists study the early peoples of the Americas and introduces some of their discoveries and theories about how these peoples lived, including the evolution of their hunting methods.



Focus on Warriors

The high-interest topic of warriors makes for an exciting gateway into history and culture, and several series make fighters in antiquity their entire focus. Crabtree's Ancient Warriors series, for middle-grade students, uses a high/low text in a larger font and striking photos of real men and women in dramatic, action-packed scenes to convey the history of gladiators, samurai, ninja, and other iconic combatants. *Savage Vikings* (2024) opens with an introduction to Viking ancestry and homes before concentrating on their special clothing, weapons, training, and tactics used to carry out bloody raids. For middle- and high-school readers, the Creative Company's Odysseys in Combat series offers more details and more types of raiders and warriors, including barbarians, conquistadors, Mongols, and pirates. In sophisticated chapters, *Gladiators* (2025) explains the rise of these forced fighters (selected from among enslaved people, hostages, and criminals) and their brutal training and battles to the death.



Focus on Format

Lastly, some series prioritize formatting information in inventive ways. In Capstone's You Choose: Ancient Empires and Civilizations series, reminiscent of the interactive Choose Your Own Path–style books, upper elementary readers (called "You") take on different roles in the Aztec, Maya, Indus, and Rapa Nui civilizations, learning about daily life and society as they navigate a variety of situations. *Life in the Indus Civilization* (2025) introduces this ancient culture in what is modern-day India and Pakistan by letting readers investigate life as a teenager choosing a career as a traveling trader or a builder. Background information, a map, photos of artifacts, and more provide context to these choices. In contrast, Rosen's Uncover History series, for middle-grade students, uses a graphic-novel format with cartoon illustrations, chunked Q&A text, and occasional jokes to introduce common and lesser-known facts about prehistoric ages and ancient civilizations. *The Shang Dynasty* (2025), for example, answers questions about the Shang people, their kings, and their cities as well as "dragon bones," bronze works, and Lady Fu Hao.

Whichever focus grabs their attention, students will find plenty of attractive options for report writing, investigation, recreational reading, or simply entertainment among these series.

Angela Leeper is the Education Studio Director at the University of Richmond (Va.).

Continued from p.74

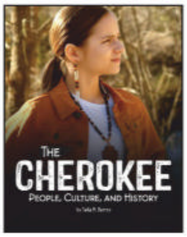
structure, and intended purpose. Architects confer with their clients, but they also confer with engineers to assure their buildings' structural integrity. Coffelt advises young, aspiring architectural designers to play *Minecraft*, reflecting that it is training a new generation, just as Legos did for a previous generation of architectural designers. While the text jumps from topic to topic, the engaging writing, the use of color photos, and the book's design elements make each page-turn an invitation to consider another element or challenge within architectural design. —*Carolyn Phelan*

★ The Cherokee: People, Culture, and History.

By Twila M. Barnes.

2025. 32p. illus. Capstone, lib. ed., $23.49 (9798875208263). Gr. 2–5. 970.3.

Finally, a nonfiction book about Cherokee people that is straightforward and details celebrations, traditions, and ways of being in addition to historical information. The comprehensive text covers geographical locations where Cherokees have lived, the three tribal governments (Cherokee Nation, Eastern Band, and United Keetoowah Band), and the causes of westward movement—from colonizer encroachment to the U.S. government forcing removal along the Trail of Tears. While historical context is given its due, Barnes (Cherokee Nation) offers insight into contemporary Cherokee people, celebrations, traditions, and cultural activities with equitable depth. Information is presented in an accessible and approachable manner. Contemporary photographs reside alongside maps, historical documents, portraits, and black-and-white drawings. This artistic arrangement reinforces that the Cherokee people are a present-day community with an active role in history as well. Readers will conclude this text, part of the Indigenous Peoples series (6 titles), with a fuller understanding of Cherokee history and their contemporary existence. A traditional recipe, a craft tutorial, and a language lesson offer fun active-learning activities, while a time line, a glossary, and additional resources provide ample back matter for educators. —*Christine Hartman Derr*



Cool Characters.

By Charis Mather.

2025. 24p. illus. Greenhaven/KidHaven, lib. ed., $20.98 (9781534550407). Gr. 2–4. 808.02.

A cartoon owl named Professor Hoot guides young writers through the process of creating and developing their own fictional characters in this volume from the Write On series (4 titles). The guidance includes introductions to academic terms such as *protagonist*, *antagonist*, and *dynamic* and *static characters*. It also covers characters' looks, personalities, names, goals, and development. In addition, it includes explanations and demonstrations of basic writing techniques, such as using details to show elements of a character rather than telling them directly. In the end, Professor Hoot recommends continuing to read in order to become a better writer. Throughout, the tips are illustrated with stock photos, sometimes overlaid with text or simple illustration. A good companion to curriculum materials for both writing and reading fiction. —*Miriam Aronin*

Denial-of-Service Attacks.

By Connor Stratton.

2025. 32p. illus. North Star/Focus Readers, lib. ed., $21.95 (9798889985167). Gr. 3–6. 600.

The world of cybersecurity is still evolving, and this volume from the Cyber Threats series (6 titles) takes a close look at distributed denial-of-service attacks (DDoS), when hackers program high amounts of traffic to access a website in order to overwhelm servers. This book be-

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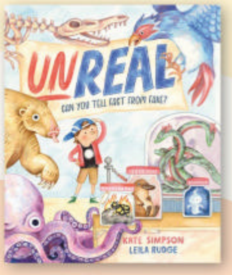

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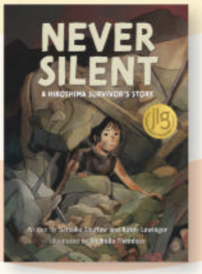
—*Kirkus Reviews* ★ (starred)



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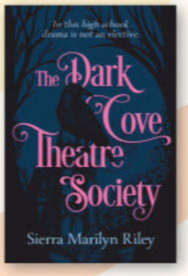
—*Booklist* ★ (starred)


In this high school drama is not an elective
The Dark Cove Theatre Society
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—*Kirkus Reviews*

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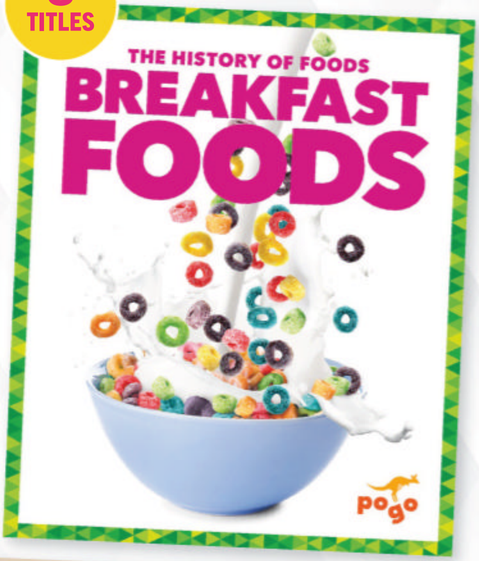
6 TITLES

SKY TERRORS
BIRDS OF PREY
MAJESTIC
EAGLES
by Jenna Grodzicki

12 TITLES

OUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAMES
SUPER SMASH BROS.
EPIC

8 TITLES


THE HISTORY OF FOODS
BREAKFAST
FOODS
pogo

DEADLY ATTACK

While some eagles circle the skies looking for prey, others **perch** in trees. With their excellent eyesight, the birds can see as far as 2 miles (3.2 km) away. Once they've spotted their target, the raptors swoop down and plunge their talons into the unsuspecting dinner.

Rather than hunting for themselves, sometimes eagles steal prey from other raptors!

12

SUPER SMASH BROS. TODAY

Super Smash Bros. can be played in person or online. Some players battle with one other player. But there can be up to eight players in one game!

SUPER SMASH BROS. GAMES BY SALES
SALES (IN MILLIONS)
GAME
AWARDS

Games can be played with or without items.

16

17

KE A LOOK!
NUMBER OF BOXES SOLD (IN MILLIONS)

Breakfast is a fun part of our day. We have many choices. What is your favorite breakfast food?

SKY TERRORS

Reading Level: Grade 3
Interest Level: Grades 2-5

OUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAMES

Reading Level: Grade 2
Interest Level: Grades 3-7

HISTORY OF FOODS

Reading Level: Grade 2
Interest Level: Grades 2-5

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STOP BY BOOTH #741 to meet the FlutterBee team and explore our new Fall 2025 titles and series.

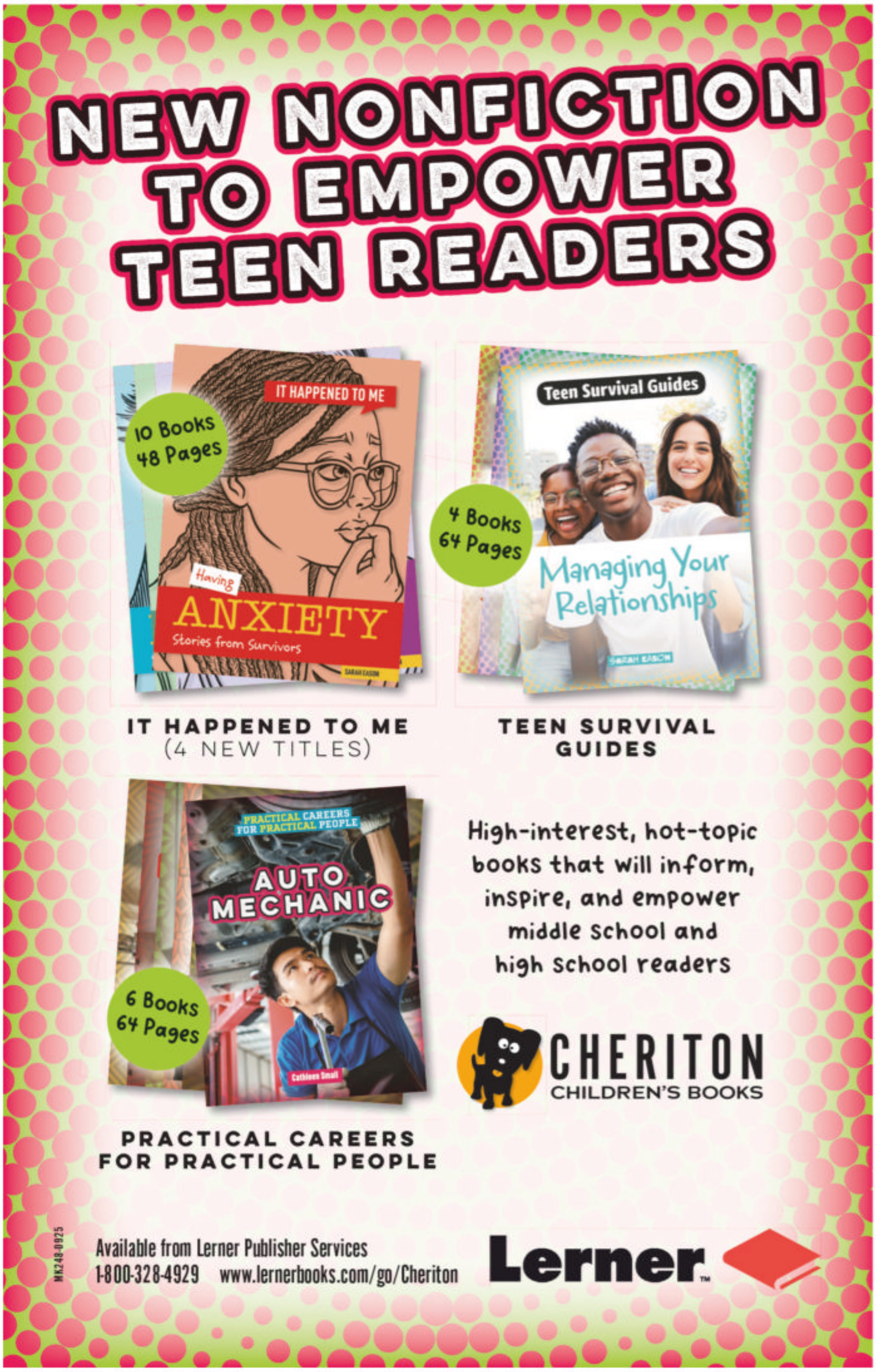
gins in 2022 with Russian cyberattacks on Ukrainian government, banking, and military websites to create chaos before starting the war. The remaining four chapters then explain how DDoS attacks work, why they are used (they can distract from other cybercrimes, like stealing data), and how to guard against such attacks (e.g., firewalls, captcha programs). The book's layout is clean and uncluttered, implementing white page backgrounds, crisp stock images, and colored fact boxes. Informational sidebars offer relevant examples and elaborate on concepts, and a concluding quiz tests readers' knowledge. —*Reilly Grant*

Elements and Compounds.

By Janet Bingham.

2025. 48p. illus. Bearport/Ursa, lib. ed., $22.37 (9798895774984). Gr. 5–8. 546.

Learn about elements and compounds in this entry of the Chemistry Explained series (4 titles). The book introduces the periodic table and its layout then moves to different element groups, types of bonds and interactions, and how elements and compounds are used in everyday life. The tone is clear and factual, the design engaging and accessible. Back matter includes review and reflection questions, a glossary, index, and further-learning resources, making it especially useful for science units or other classroom use. The full-color photos throughout help to connect abstract or complex chemistry concepts to real-life examples, making the content more relatable and easier to understand. With a strong focus on vocabulary, categorization, and practical application, this is a solid addition to classrooms looking to support hands-on science learning with accessible texts. —*Kirsten Caldwell*



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PRACTICAL CAREERS FOR PRACTICAL PEOPLE
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Escape the Mummy's Tomb.

By Philip Steele.

2025. 72p. illus. Rosen YA, lib. ed., $27.10 (9781499479768). Gr. 3–7. 932.

Time to brush up on your fire-starting skills because you're about to be dropped into a tomb shaft in the Valley of the Kings, and it's dark in there. The "you" in question is your new persona, a 13-year-old from Thebes, 1300 BCE. Employing a choose-your-own-path format, the book offers a lively presentation of royal burial during ancient Egypt's New Kingdom period as the reader is sent scurrying through a dangerous tomb. Depending on their choices, they'll encounter obstacles (pits, tomb robbers, scorpions), depictions of daily life and deities, and distinct areas of the tomb, from treasure room to burial chamber. Unsurprisingly, the information is light, but the interesting tidbits and photos of art and artifacts could easily prompt readers to continue their exploration of ancient Egypt beyond this fun volume in the Escape! series (3 titles). —*Julia Smith*

Events That Shaped America: Ellis Island, The Depression, March on Washington.

By Molly Aloian and Robin Johnson.

2025. 64p. illus. Crabtree/Canopy, lib. ed., $26.95 (9781039897649). Gr. 5–8. 973.

This presents three historical topics that affected many people in the U.S. and Canada during the twentieth century, providing a useful framework for understanding this historical period. The first chapter discusses the surge of immigration on the East and West Coasts, from the late 1800s through the 1950s, despite resistance from many citizens. The second chapter traces the devastating effects of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and the widespread poverty that followed. The third chapter describes the civil rights movement's hard-won progress in its efforts to end racial prejudice and violence against African Americans. Offering interesting text, colorful sidebars, and many period photos, this appealing title in the What Do You Know! series (6 volumes) is publishing under Crabtree's new Canopy imprint, which seeks to support upper middle-grade and early high-school students. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Florence Price.

By Joanne Mattern. Illus. by Marilena Perilli.

2025. 32p. Red Chair, lib. ed., $22.99 (9781643714486). Gr. 3–5. 780.92.

African American Florence Price is one of two women featured (the other is Clara

Schumann) in the Classical Composers series (8 titles). Accessible, brief passages of text in slightly enlarged font and multiple photos and reproductions trace Price's groundbreaking career set against Jim Crow America. Born into wealth in Arkansas in 1887, musical prodigy Price had to lie and say she was Mexican while a student at the New England Conservatory; in 1927, she moved to Chicago as part of the Great Migration. Price's unique compositions combined elements of classical music with traditional spirituals. Her once-popular works were rediscovered in 2009 after decades of neglect. The text emphasizes her multiple awards, honors, and accolades, justifying her inclusion in this series along with other accomplished composers such as Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. A timeline and glossary round out this tribute. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Freedom of the Press.

By Mary Griffin.

2025. 32p. illus. Gareth Stevens, lib. ed., $21.20 (9781482470321). Gr. 5–8. 323.44.

Part of the A Look at the Bill of Rights series (6 titles), this informative volume offers a clear exploration of one of the most vital freedoms protected under the U.S. Constitution. Griffin traces the evolution of press freedoms from colonial America to present-day digital platforms. The book explains how the First Amendment empowers journalists as government watchdogs by way of real-world examples like the Pentagon Papers case. Sidebars and a glossary of terms reinforce comprehension, while colorful images and primary source visuals support engagement. The book doesn't shy away from contemporary questions, asking readers and students to consider the difference between press and personal expression in the age of social media. This is ideal for classroom discussions on free speech as well as for those looking to educate themselves about the topic in today's changing media landscape. —*Aurora Dominguez*

Frozen Treats.

By Kristine Spanier.

2025. 24p. illus. Jump!/Pogo, lib. ed., $20.99 (9798892139151). Gr. 1–4. 641.86209.

Nothing beats a frozen sweet treat, as explored in this delectable selection from The History of Foods series (8 titles). With a decidedly American lens, this historical survey of how frozen delights came to be starts with the first account of ice cream in the U.S. and journeys to the 1904 World's Fair, which debuted the waffle cone, and then to a soda fountain staple, the banana split. The work then expands to include Popsicles, prepackaged ice cream, and the launching of notable ice cream shops. Sidebars are featured throughout, posing questions and sharing fun facts, and vibrant pictures will leave readers craving something sweet. A concluding timeline recaps key historical moments, which are also brought to life by the book's many period photos. Ideal for elementary readers just getting into historical discovery. —*Kelly Ferreira*

Gemini.

By Elizabeth Andrews.

2025. 32p. illus. ABDO/DiscoverRoo, lib. ed., $23.95 (9781098247904). Gr. 2–5. 133.52.

This title from the Zodiac Signs series (12 titles) spotlights the third star sign in the zodiac cycle. Related iconography follows the introduction of the astrological sign, such as the constellation, symbol, numbers, and more, as well as characteristics associated with people who are born Geminis. What follows is the history of astrology (dating back 5,000 years), the communication styles and sociability of Geminis, and the duality of Gemini personalities (represented by a twin constellation). Sidebars include famous Geminis, such as Kendrick Lamar and Tom Holland, details related to birth charts, and activity links. Astute readers may notice the arbitrary nature of traits associated with a star sign but will likely appreciate the history and relatability. A concluding "Making Connections" activity, glossary, index, and digital resources round out this appealing resource. —*Kelly Ferreira*

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Greatest Pass Catchers.

By Joe Tischler.

2025. 32p. illus. Creative Company/Creative Education, lib. ed., $25.95 (9798889896159). Gr. 3–6. 796.332.

The best of the best in football pass catching are gathered in this entry in the Creative Sports: NFL Hall of Famers series (6 titles). Eleven wide receiver and tight end standouts are listed by the years they received a place in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, beginning with Don Hutson, who played in the 1930s and 1940s, and ending with Calvin Johnson, who retired in 2015. The players' individual merits are shown through statistics and rankings demonstrating why the players exceed traditional player expectations. Young football fans who engage with the sport in this way will feast on the information, but there's little in the way of personal details about the players. Challenging vocabulary extends the age group of interested readers, and beautiful photographs elevate the players' football prowess. A strong choice for libraries looking to fill out sports nonfiction sections or please younger football-stats aficionados. —*Casey O'Leary*

Hip-Hop and Social Justice.

By Monica D. Morall-Baker.

2025. 32p. illus. Lerner, lib. ed., $22.99 (9798765659861). Gr. 4–8. 306.48424.

This slim volume, part of the Hip-Hop Culture series (6 titles) from the Read Woke line, does a solid job of introducing the power of music as a voice for marginalized populations. Reader-friendly features include short chapters with brief paragraphs set off by subtitles, colorful graphics, illustrations, photos, and sidebars, a glossary, sources, and reading list. A brief historical overview touches on Underground Railroad–era spirituals and protest songs of the 1960s, but most of the coverage concentrates on milestones from the 1980s to the present day. Highlights address icons, songs, videos, awards, notable firsts, and current campaigns (Kendrick Lamar's 2018 Pulitzer, Da Brat's work with the Make-A-Wish Foundation). The final chapter explores how hip-hop can be a powerful changemaker for schools, mental health, politics, and social activism. Great for both browsers and researchers. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Hot Hair.

By Virginia Loh-Hagan.

2025. 32p. illus. Cherry Lake/45th Parallel, lib. ed., $23.45 (9781668963814). Gr. 5–8. 391.509.

With eye-popping images and snappy text, *Hot Hair* dives into the fascinating, sometimes wild world of hairstyle trends. Loh-Hagan blends cultural history, fashion commentary, and fun facts in a fast-paced, visually engaging format. From Marie Antoinette's towering poufs to Japanese samurai topknots to 1980s Gumby cuts, the book explores a global range of hair expressions across time. Highlights include features on the political roots of natural hairstyles, such as the California CROWN Act, and modern revivals of older styles. Crisp sidebars, bold vocabulary, and inclusive imagery make this title both accessible and empowering, especially for students interested in self-expression. Part of the Style It: Trends and Fads series (6 titles), this installment uses fashion to start broader conversations on beauty, race, and social change while inspiring current generations to explore their own personal style. —*Aurora Dominguez*

How to Control Impulses.

By Golriz Golkar.

2025. 24p. illus. Jump!/Blue Owl, lib. ed., $20.99 (9798892138857). Gr. 1–4. 303.3.

This entry in the Getting Better All the Time series (6 titles) offers an engaging and accessible introduction to self-regulation. With a focus on SEL, it helps children understand what impulses are and why learning to manage them is an important life skill. Through relatable scenarios such as wanting to blurt out in class, getting angry with a parent, and rushing through a test, the book supports emotional growth and encourages positive decision-making. The leveled text is easy to follow, making it ideal for early readers. Sidebars with high-quality photographs help connect the content to real-life situations, making the concepts more meaningful. Included are practice goals to control impulses and suggestions for ways to use visualization to help deepen comprehension. A valuable resource for teaching emotional intelligence, self-control, and a growth mindset in developmentally appropriate ways. —*Alana Jara*

Jane Goodall.

By Amy B. Rogers.

2025. 32p. illus. Cavendish Square, lib. ed., $21.15 (9781502674593). Gr. 2–5. 590.92.

Rogers' simply written biographical narrative sums up Jane Goodall's lifelong love of animals, her path to primatology at a time when few women were active in this field, her achievements, and her influence on others. Readers will learn of her work with renowned scientist Louis Leakey and her passionate advocacy against scientific experimentation on primates and the destruction of animal habitats, particularly in Africa. Part of the Inside Guide: STEM Superwomen series (6 titles), this biography is divided into four short chapters with captioned color photos appearing on nearly every double-page spread. Frequent fact bubbles add interesting trivia; full-page asides provide important context, such as addressing colonialism in Africa and describing the Jane Goodall Institute's Roots & Shoots youth program. A timeline and critical-thinking questions conclude this concise yet compelling resource. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Kindness: The Story of Fred Rogers.

By Ib Larsen.

2025. 24p. illus. The Child's World/Wonder, lib. ed., $22.95 (9781503871229). Gr. 2–4. 791.

Beloved public-broadcast icon Fred Rogers is the star of this biography in the Value Biographies series (8 titles), which presents remarkable people in history through the lens of a defining character trait. The book begins with one of Rogers' greatest moments—his successful appeal to the Senate regarding the value of public educational TV and why it should maintain its funding. The next two chapters provide examples of how Rogers demonstrated kindness both on his public television show, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, and in the community around him. These include welcoming actors of different races and sexual orientations on his show as well as narrating his actions for blind fans. Large photographs and graphics support the clearly written text, and the work concludes with "Wonder More" questions, "Fast Facts," "Acts of Kindness" suggestions, and additional resources. —*Kelly Ferreira*

Life in the Indus Civilization: An Interactive Ancient History Adventure.

By Eric Braun.

2025. 112p. illus. Capstone, lib. ed., $25.99 (9798875216336). Gr. 3–5. 959.

Adopting an interactive "choose your own path" style, this title in the You Choose: Ancient Empires and Civilizations series (4 titles) presents the Indus civilization, which began around 5500 BCE along the Indus River in what is modern-day India and Pakistan. The reader (called "you" and presumably a male character throughout) can navigate the ins and outs of daily life in Indus society as a teenager choosing a career in Mohenjo-daro, a traveling trader based in Lothal, or a builder in Harappa. Both positive and negative story outcomes create realistic experiences. An introductory overview of the Indus civilization, a map, a timeline, photos of artifacts and the region today, and a note about the civilization's decline provide more facts about this lesser-known but fascinating time period. —*Angela Leeper*

The Magnificent Book of Monsters.

By Diana Ferguson. Illus. by Gonzalo Kenny.

2025. 80p. Cavendish Square, lib. ed., $26.15 (9781502675583). Gr. 3–6. 001.944.

This lushly illustrated compendium from the Magnificent Books series (3 titles) presents monstrous creatures from myths and legends around the world—36 of them, to be precise. While there's no apparent rhyme or reason to their arrangement, each entry is consistently presented on a double-page spread that pairs a bulleted overview with a dramatic painting of the beast. A small "At a Glance" box is also nestled on the spread, providing a mini snapshot of the monster's location, appearance, "lair," behavior, and power. Built for browsers, this book holds ample pick-me-up appeal and will especially entice mythology buffs. The eclectic mix of monsters draws from Aztec, Japanese, Chinese, Greek, South African, Irish, and Mexican cultures, to name a few, and they are all charted on an appended world map. —*Julia Smith*

Make Mega Money.

By Claudia Martin. Illus. by Yekyung Kwon.

2025. 32p. Rosen/PowerKids, lib. ed., $20.95 (9781499453959). Gr. 3–5. 331.2.

This volume in the Master Your Money series (4 titles) presents a barrage of money-making ideas, most of which are realistically attainable by elementary-age kids. Making and selling crafts, helping neighbors, and initiating bake sales are some of the suggested paths kids can follow to start making money. The text offers practical tips on building toward paid work, such as babysitting with parents present at first and acquiring skills through chores that can then be monetized. Illustrations are colorful and feature an anthropomorphized gold coin and paper bill. Banks and taxes are touched upon, as are business basics. The need for aspiring entrepreneurs to continually consult trusted adults is reinforced everywhere. A robust glossary explaining the many business terms and a list of resources round out the text. *—Deidre Winterhalter*

Managing Autoimmune Diseases.

By Tomi Rues.

2025. 80p. illus. Mitchell Lane, lib. ed., $30 (9798892607117). Gr. 4–7. 616.97.

According to this entry in the Managing Common Illnesses series (8 titles), there may be as many as 100 autoimmune disorders, but the focus here is on type 1 diabetes, psoriatic arthritis, Graves' disease, and lupus. An opening story about Venus Williams' Sjögren's syndrome diagnosis and other celebrities with autoimmune disorders quickly helps normalize these illnesses. Individual chapters with straightforward text and personal statements from affected young people offer a thorough summary of autoimmune disorders by explaining the nature of these illnesses, the difficulty of being diagnosed, what it's like living with an autoimmune disorder, common treatments, and developing research. Intermittent text boxes on topics such as experiencing an MRI provide more details. A list of ways to support friends with autoimmune disorders concludes this informative and beneficial volume. *—Angela Leeper*

Nests.

By Jay Leslie.

2025. 32p. illus. Scholastic/Children's Press, lib. ed., $25 (9781546177364). Gr. 2–4. 590.

Sure, birds have a chapter in this selection from the Learn About: Animal Homes series (4 titles), but they're not the only nest-builders out there. This book also covers squirrels, mice, hedgehogs, and frogs. Photos dominate the pages, showing cute critters snug in their carefully crafted homes, which several species modify for seasonal temperature changes. Each animal receives its own four-page chapter comprised of a brief "Fact File" stating its animal group, diet, and habitat(s); small blocks of text that offer details about the animal and its nests; and fast-fact boxes. Readers may be most surprised by the section on frogs, which kicks off with a tree frog laying its eggs in a foam nest positioned over a body of water. Additional nest-making animals are rounded up in the book's final pages. *—Julia Smith*

Peggy Flanagan: Lieutenant Governor.

By Jessica Engelking. Illus. by Tashia Hart.

2025. 56p. Lerner, paper, $12.99 (9798765671801). Gr. 2–4. 977.6054092.

This chapter-book biography from the Native American Lives series (4 titles) is an accessible, informative introduction to the life and work of Peggy Flanagan, Minnesota's lieutenant governor. Short, easy-to-read chapters detail the moments and events that shaped Flanagan's path. Her life is profiled from her elementary-school days through the 2024 presidential campaign. Many time periods and events are covered, presented in a narrative fashion that makes for an engaging read. Hart's grayscale illustrations, interspersed throughout, add to the story, and black-and-white photos from Flanagan's life reinforce pivotal moments. Extensive back matter includes sections on historical context, a timeline, a glossary, source notes, and extended-learning ideas. Though this volume is slim, it is rich with information and resources, all of which are readily accessible for young readers. *—Christine Hartman Derr*

Rainforest.

By Paul Mason.

2025. 32p. illus. Enslow, lib. ed., $20.20 (9781978545366). Gr. 3–5. 577.34.

Part of the Cause, Effect, Chaos! series (6 titles), this book lets readers consider natural and man-made activities within tropical rain forests and the impacts these actions potentially have down the line. The chapters cover such topics as food cycles, predators and prey, and global warming and other human impacts on rain forests. The illustrations are colorful with a retro vibe in the style of Risograph printing. Visually, the text and images have been playfully laid out almost as a series of flowcharts. Arrows guide readers through images and unconventional text placement (e.g., sentences may be broken up to follow a winding river or slanted across the page) so that the pages never become overstimulating. Aspiring environmental scientists will enjoy exploring the busy cycles of tropical rain forests on display here. *—Reilly Grant*

Rescued by a Whale.

By Joyce Markovics.

2025. 24p. illus. Cherry Lake, lib. ed., $22.45 (9781668963524). Gr. 3–5. 599.52.

Help can come from unlikely places, and the True Animal Rescues series (6 titles) shares incredible stories of heroic creatures. In this title, readers will learn about four instances when whales rescued humans in danger. The succinct accounts typically span four photo-rich pages and share amazing tales of a humpback whale saving a marine scientist from a tiger shark, a beluga whale lifting an aquarium worker back to the surface of its tank, and valiant dolphin pods protecting swimmers. The clean, uncluttered layout features well-chosen stock images (many full-page); text on solid backgrounds; bolded vocabulary; and interesting factoids inserted as captions or in color bars. A concluding whale "profile" highlights whales as social, compassionate, and sensitive creatures. A visually attractive and easy-to-read offering for animal lovers. *—Reilly Grant*

Sagrada Familia.

By Alicia Z. Klepeis.

2025. 24p. illus. Bellwether/Blastoff!, lib. ed., $20.97 (9798893044959). Gr. 2–4. 726.509467.

With construction of Barcelona's renowned basilica beginning in 1882 and still continuing today, the Sagrada Familia, or "Holy Family" in Spanish, will soon become the tallest church in the world. This entry in the World Famous Buildings series (6 titles) educates transitional readers about the Sagrada Familia, one of the world's most visited churches. Containing short sentences and illuminating infographics, this level 3 reader delivers information concisely, with difficult vocabulary words defined simply in the glossary. (For example, *porphyry*, one of the building materials used in columns inside the church, is defined as "a rock containing feldspar crystals set within a dark red or purple base.") A helpful introduction to the Sagrada Familia and the distinctive designs of Antoni Gaudí for young readers developing an interest in architecture. *—Julie Goldschmied*

Skyrim.

By Erin Silver.

2025. 48p. illus. Creative Company/Creative Education, lib. ed., $30.95 (9798889896357). Gr. 6–8. 794.8.

This entry in the Game Changers series (8 titles) delves into the history surrounding *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, an action RPG widely regarded as one of the greatest—and most successful—video games ever made. Silver's text is engaging, striking a comfortable tone that gamers will be drawn into. The four sections cover the many features that made the game so innovative and beloved, from its visual design to its immersive gameplay and accessibility to modders. Regular tangents introduce some of the more influential names behind the game's development and the backstory behind Bethesda Game Studios, *Skyrim*'s maker. Photography, both from in-game and elsewhere, breaks up the text in a simple layout. Back matter contains a glossary, index, and sources. A sure hit for new or nostalgic gamers interested in the history of video games. *—Ronny Khuri*

Snowy Owlets.

By Kelley Barth.

2025. 24p. illus. The Child's World/Wonder, lib. ed., $22.95 (9781503870802). Gr. 2–4. 598.9.

Who would have thought an adorable gray ball of fluff the size of a tangerine could grow into a majestic snowy owl, the largest bird in the Arctic? This attractive selection from the Polar Baby Animals series (8 titles) begins with the courtship ritual of two snowy owls and continues by focusing on the development of the resulting eggs, from hatchings all the way to independent young adults making their first migration. The layout is orderly and engaging, making good use of white space as well as gorgeous wildlife photography. Full of information but never overwhelming, this worthwhile resource includes the usual nonfiction staples: a map, fact boxes, a glossary, and an index. The title also includes a size comparison of baby and adult snowy owls and a suggested craft activity. —*Julie Goldschmied*

Speedy Falcons.

By Bryan Langdo.

2025. 24p. illus. Bearport, lib. ed., $21.67 (9798895770597). Gr. 3–5. 598.96.

Watch out—these fierce birds of prey are on the move! If you are looking to expand your collection of books on apex predators, look no further. The action-packed Sky Terrors: Birds of Prey series (6 titles) will attract fans of the Who Would Win series, with its informational chapters paired with high-definition images. Nine short chapters highlight falcons' speed, physical characteristics and abilities (e.g., talons and eyesight), and typical lifespans, while highlighted sections between chapters relay surprising facts. The selected images show off these birds' impressive wingspans, duels, and adorable chicks. The book focuses on falcons in general, but it offers thumbnail details of three specific species at the end. Colorful page designs, large fonts, and clear, engaging writing make this a great addition to nonfiction collections. —*Reilly Grant*

Stars of Indian Mythology.

By Nancy Dickmann. Illus. by Matt Lilly.

2025. 32p. Gareth Stevens, lib. ed., $21.20 (9781482473346). Gr. 3–6. 294.51.

A playful format enlivens this volume in the Stars of Mythology series (6 titles). First, it introduces Hindu mythology, describing its main types of gods and demons, its three most important gods, and how gods appear on Earth in many forms. The bulk of the book, however, is divided into six retellings of Hindu myths. In each case, characters are paired. After they give a little background information about themselves, a story explains their connection. For instance, in "Love Conquers All," Savitri, a princess, tricks Yama, a god of death, into bringing her dead husband, Satyavan, back to life. The stories vary in format, including a traditional narrative, a diary entry, an interview, and a comic. Colorful graphics that combine cartoon bodies with heads from historical artwork complement the book's unconventional presentation. —*Angela Leeper*

What Is Artificial Intelligence?

By Cody Crane.

Oct. 2025. 48p. illus. Scholastic/Children's Press, lib. ed., $31 (9781546178217). Gr. 4–6. 006.3.

The True Book: Our Digital World series (4 titles) brings readers accessible overviews of important tech topics, and in this case, it's artificial intelligence. First, a quick history of "thinking machines" and AI programs introduces early strides in the field and how AI uses algorithms to learn new information. Next, the book presents different AI models (machine learning, deep learning, large language, and generative) with illustrative examples of their use. One spread stages a hypothetical debate between two students making arguments for and against using chatbots to help with schoolwork. The final two chapters examine many ways in which AI is used today and ongoing debates surrounding its use, including issues of artistic theft, spreading misinformation, and the environmental costs of data centers. AI safety tips and stats round out this timely, balanced resource. —*Julia Smith*

Young

Clucky Chickens.

By Ryan James.

2025. 24p. illus. Rosen/Norwood, lib. ed., $18.95 (9781978574243). K–Gr. 3. 598.61.

This entry in The Barnyard Bunch series (6 titles) lets chickens strut their stuff as it gives a rudimentary rundown of their physical appearance, diet, vocalizations, and nesting habits. The simple, uncluttered layout makes this a good choice for new readers, who will appreciate the white page backgrounds and short sentences, though they may need assistance with new vocabulary words, such as *omnivores* and *communicate.* Bolded terms are defined in a glossary, which also includes pronunciations. Large photos of hens and roosters abound, and while the text doesn't impart any groundbreaking information, readers will be able to fine-tune their existing knowledge, giving name to those odd red bits (*wattles* and *combs*) and learning that chickens will munch on about anything. A short concluding quiz tests readers' chicken chops. —*Julia Smith*

Curious About Tiger Sharks.

By Debra Randorf.

2025. 24p. illus. Amicus Learning, lib. ed., $24.95 (9798892005074). Gr. 1–3. 597.3.

Part of the Curious About Sharks series (8 titles), this is an engaging and informative title for young readers fascinated by ocean life. It uses a question-and-answer format to explore the habitat, diet, behavior, and life cycle of tiger sharks, one of the ocean's most intriguing predators. With vibrant infographics, fun facts, and high-interest content, it caters to nature lovers. This series satisfies curiosity about sharks by encouraging students to ask questions and dig deeper into their learning. Readers will be captivated to learn, for instance, why a tiger shark is called the "trash can of the sea" and why it's illegal to hunt them in certain areas. Ideal for minds eager to explore the wonders of nature and the mysteries of the deep sea. —*Alana Jara*

Dinosaur Atlas.

By Penelope Arlon. Illus. by Paul Daviz.

2025. 32p. Rosen/Windmill, lib. ed., $21.70 (9781538399927). K–Gr. 2. 567.9.

Time to meet some delightful dinosaurs! This entertaining entry in the My First Atlas series (4 titles) begins with a broad introduction to the subject but quickly narrows its focus to specific time periods (Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous) and the remarkable residents of all of the modern continents. Each striking spread features a main discussion, small sidenotes, and an intriguing assignment (spot-its, observational questions) to keep readers engaged, with the short length managing to pack in plenty of fun facts. The prismatic illustrations are bold and stylish, giving a wonderful sense of place, scale, and movement. Multiple species are showcased on every page, all carefully labeled with pronunciation guides; there are old favorites along with lots of unusual picks (*Muttaburrasaurus, Tarbosaurus*). An impressive introduction in a supremely pretty package. —*Emily Graham*

Discovering Seabirds.

By Charis Mather.

2025. 24p. illus. Bearport/Fusion, lib. ed., $21.67 (9798895770252). PreS–Gr. 3. 598.2.

In this colorful introduction to birds that live above or beside the sea, Captain Gulliver of "See-Gulls Ocean Tours," welcomes people aboard his cruise ship and introduces them to a series of birds they can observe during the tour. From talkative gulls to pelicans, which produce an oil that protects their feathers from getting waterlogged at sea, and albatrosses, which can glide above the ocean for hours without landing, each type of bird is described in terms of qualities that make it well adapted to its seaside habitat. The most enjoyable parts of the book are the seven double-page spreads that discuss and illustrate particular species of seabirds. The incorporation of photos into the digital illustrations works unusually well in this appealing book from the See-Gulls Ocean Tours series (4 titles). —*Carolyn Phelan*

Dredgers.

By Kaitlyn Duling.

2025. 24p. illus. Bellwether/Blastoff!, $20.97 (9798893044843). Gr. 1–3. 627.7.

If you think big machines only work on land, guess again. This selection from the Ships Ahoy! series (6 titles) gives youngsters the scoop on dredgers. Whether cruising on a barge or floating on a platform, these massive dirt movers can clear waterways and assist in underwater mining. This level 2 reader uses a nice mix of clearly written sentences, colorful layouts, photos of dredgers at work, and close-up photos and colorful diagrams to show specific parts of these machines and how they function. Kids will encounter a variety of dredgers (bucket ladder, dipper, water injector, cutter suction) slowly chugging along on the water as well as different workers who keep them running. An engaging and well-designed offering, sure to float any vehicularly inclined kid's boat. —*Julia Smith*

French.

By Kirsten Chang.

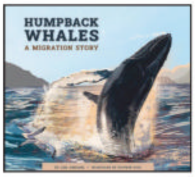
2025. 24p. illus. Bellwether/Blastoff!, lib. ed., $20.97 (9798893044492). Gr. 1–3. 448.2421.

Bonjour! Kids receive a warm welcome to the French language in this well-organized primer. Rather than packing pages with vocabulary, the book presents scenes at a stated locale (e.g., home, school, the pool) on double-page spreads that feature a large photo with French labels, two sentences in English that incorporate two to three words in French, and a "Words to Know" box with more French words and phrases related to the scene at hand; this box features pronunciation guides and definitions. The structure and limited vocabulary create a nice way for readers to dip a toe into learning another language without getting overwhelmed. In addition to French, the First Words In . . . series (8 titles) includes introductions to Arabic, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Swahili. —*Julia Smith*

★ Humpback Whales.

By Lisa Amstutz. Illus. by Howard Gray.

2025. 24p. Amicus Learning, lib. ed., $25.95 (9781645492832). Gr. 1–3. 599.5.



Humpback whales migrate annually from cold waters to warm, traveling thousands of miles. This title outlines the journey of a female humpback swimming from Alaska to Hawaii with her small pod. Readers experience her interactions with other whales, witness the dangers she encounters from animals and humans, and learn that the pinnacle of this year's journey is the birth of a 15-foot calf. Author Amstutz highlights ways in which the members of the pod communicate with one another and the tender ways the mother parents her calf. The text is clear and simple, with enriching vocabulary defined in a glossary. A message about the devastating effects of microplastics threads throughout. Intricate underwater and brilliant surface images are mesmerizing. Former dolphin biologist Gray's images are both informative and beautiful—a magical combination. The book's helpful back matter includes a global migration map, tips for kids to help whales by reducing plastic use, and a list of recent resources. This selection from the Incredible Migrations series (6 titles) is highly recommended. —*Deidre Winterhalter*

Manta Rays.

By Mari Schuh.

2025. 24p. illus. Black Rabbit/Bolt Jr., lib. ed., $24.95 (9781644669020). Gr. 1–3. 597.35.

A relative of sharks, manta rays glide through warm ocean waters around the world, some clinging to the coast and others braving deeper waters. Simple, digestible paragraphs on white backgrounds, paired with sharp photographs and infographics, make this offering from the Ocean Life series (6 titles) an accessible introduction to these diamond-shaped fish. The layout is clean, with teal and dark-blue graphics that reinforce the ocean theme. Pops of color are used effectively to draw the eye to a diagram labeling parts of a manta ray, as well as to bonus facts about these sea creatures. Early readers will learn about the animal's diet, habitat, family life, and variations in size. Definitions for bolded words are included on the page and also in a glossary. An excellent resource for research projects or personal enjoyment. —*Julie Goldschmied*

Medieval Castles.

By Grace Hansen.

2025. 24p. illus. ABDO/Kids Jumbo, lib. ed., $23.95 (9798384905295). K–Gr. 2. 940.1.

Castles never cease to amaze with their grandeur, and this volume in the Middle Ages series (6 titles) does just that. Accessible text (two to three sentences per page and printed in a larger font) first describes the Middle Ages and a castle's typical architectural structures and rooms during this time period. Reproductions and photos of real castles with labels and smaller, inset visuals reinforce comprehension. The second half of the book features several famous castles in Europe—from Romania's Bran Castle to Spain's Alcázar Castle to England's Tintagel Castle—and relates their importance. Impressive double-page photos spotlight the magnificence of each castle, while small maps help beginning readers position the castle's location. A large concluding infographic of a fictional castle with all its parts labeled is a helpful, summative guide. —*Angela Leeper*

Plesiosaur.

By Lily Austen.

2025. 24p. illus. Jump!/Bullfrog, lib. ed., $20.99 (9798892139939). K–Gr. 2. 567.937.

Written largely in short, simple sentences, *Plesiosaur* is aimed at beginning readers who are also beginning their study of nonfiction. Fledgling readers will be able to handle short sentences, such as "It is a water reptile" and "Fish swim," although they may need help with the occasional longer sentence or dinosaur name, though pronunciation guides are included. The very simple text, often with only two brief sentences per spread, limits the amount of detail about the plesiosaur the book can include. For instructional purposes, the book features a handful of ideas for parents and teachers, plus a table of contents, an index, and a picture glossary. The illustrations combine watery photos with realistic depictions of the gigantic water lizard, as well as a labeled "Parts of a Plesiosaur" diagram. From the Dinosaur World series (6 titles). —*Miriam Aronin*

We Gather at a Sikh Gurdwara: A Place in Our Community.

By Jasneet Kaur.

2025. 24p. illus. Capstone/Pebble, lib. ed., $22.49 (9798875223242). Gr. 1–3. 294.6.

This selection from the Where We Gather series (6 titles) introduces readers to the gurdwara, the religious building for Sikhs. The book is simple and fact based, identifying the Sikh holy book (Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji), the spaces found in a gurdwara, and the customs of Sikh people who attend religious services and other events there. Kaur brings an authentic point of view to the material as both a member of the Sikh community and the author of several other children's books about Sikh history and practice. The text is illustrated with appropriate, well-captioned stock photos. While readers may be left with questions about Sikh practices, this book is a good introduction to a place and religion that may be unfamiliar to many non-Sikh readers. A craft activity and additional resources conclude. —*Miriam Aronin*

When a Parent Moves Out.

By E. C. Andrews.

2025. 24p. illus. Greenhaven/KidHaven, lib. ed., $20.98 (9781534550254). Gr. 1–3. 306.89.

The A Guide to Change series (4 titles) is designed for little ones experiencing big changes in their lives. This gentle book delves into the emotional and practical impacts of a parent moving out of the home, whether due to work or separation/divorce, taking care to validate children's feelings and worries over such an event. Colorful spreads feature large photos of children in family settings or with friends and short, reassuring text bubbles that offer helpful tips, such as talking about feelings with a trusted adult, asking questions, participating in hobbies, spending time with friends, finding a new routine, and using mindful breathing techniques when feeling anxious or overwhelmed. This useful resource takes a positive and productive approach to emotional health, making it a good addition to any library. —*Rosie Camargo*

Who Am I? Pandas and Others Bears.

By Jody Jensen Shaffer. Illus. by Travis Foster.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Highlights, lib. ed., $14.99 (9781639623839). K–Gr. 3. 599.78.

Here's an interactive option that both little listeners and independent readers will enjoy. Structured as a guessing game, this book introduces kids to six different bear species, each of which is allotted two double-page spreads of information. The first spread features a scrambled photo and a poem that incorporates its bear's characteristics and the question, "Who am I?" Readers can take a guess before turning the page to reveal the answer along with the now unscrambled picture and a busy page of trivia illustrated with cartoon drawings and smaller photos. In addition to the giant panda, the book spotlights sun, sloth, polar, grizzly, and American black bears. The ursine overview wraps up with a "More Mystery Bears!" spread and a quiz. One of two titles in the Who Am I? series. —*Julia Smith*

Spotlight on **the Arts**

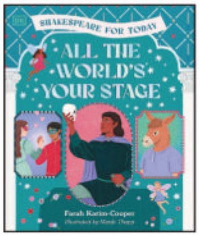
Art from A Knot Is Not a Tangle.

Older Nonfiction

★ All the World's Your Stage: Shakespeare for Today.

By Farah Karim-Cooper. Illus. by Manjit Thapp.

Nov. 2025. 80p. DK/DK Children, $19.99 (9780593966952).
Gr. 6–9. 822.33.



Folger Shakespeare Library director Karim-Cooper excellently introduces the work and context of William Shakespeare in this handsomely illustrated work with Renaissance-esque portraiture. After introducing the Bard and his possible education (as noted in the book, his intellectual origins are contested due to less documentation in the 1600s), she covers his life in London, the creation of The Globe Theater, the significance of the Tudors to his playwriting, the Elizabethan era at large, and actors and audiences that he worked with and performed for (including an important acknowledgement of the multiculturalism of London in Shakespeare's lifetime). What follows are simplified yet thorough overviews of eight of Shakespeare's most prominent plays, along with a supplemental contextualization of the work in history and its themes. The visual delight concludes with a note from the author, highlighting the importance of acknowledging Shakespeare's accessibility to commonfolk, despite the cultural assertion that Shakespeare can only be enjoyed by elites and academics, and the relevance his timeless plays still have to the modern era. A concluding timeline (noted to be a best estimate from legal documents, court records, etc.), glossary, and index conclude this comprehensive examination of the theatrical icon. This would make an excellent supplement to middle-grade or early high-school literature curricula or serve as a handy piece for young Bard researchers. *—Kelly Ferreira*

Phenomenal Moments: Revealing the Hidden Science Around Us.

By Felice Frankel. Illus. by the author.

Nov. 2025. 128p. Candlewick/MITeen, $21.99 (9781536234893). Gr. 8–12. 779.

A picture is worth a thousand words, and science photographer and MIT research scientist Frankel has created a beautiful book full of them, demonstrating scientific concepts through snippets of everyday life. From an up-close look at the patterns of a wooden fence post (showing the rings of the original tree and the saw marks from a chainsaw) to showcasing the inside of a gerbera daisy, the photos are clear, crisp, and vibrant. The book is separated into five chapters, with each picture given three elements: "What Do You See?" (the actual photograph), "Moment" (explaining how and when the picture came to be), and "Phenomenon" (explaining the science behind what is seen). Some photos were taken with a true camera, some items were placed on a high-resolution scanner, some were created with the author's phone, and the author admits to using AI in one photo to achieve the intended effect. The text does not crowd out the photos, and scientific vocabulary is put in bold letters and explained. A great look at science in nature from an artistic perspective. *—Jessica Durham*

Middle Nonfiction

The Great Big Book of Museums.

By Éva Bensard. Illus. by Benjamin Chaud. Tr. by Karin Snelson.

Oct. 2025. 60p. Red Comet, $26.99 (9781636551524).
Gr. 3–6. 060.

Whether used for research or armchair travel, this compilation of 13 museums is a fun way to consider the world's collections of art, history, culture, and science. The museums not only range in content, from Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum to New York's American Museum of Natural History to Monaco's Oceanographic Museum, but also illuminate unique collections, such as the Palace Museum in Beijing, the Frida Kahlo Museum in Mexico City, and Paris' Quai Branly Museum, which specifically celebrates the art of non-European people. Each museum is presented over two double-page spreads, the first featuring a loosely drawn Where's Waldo?–like scene with the museum—and occasionally an interior cutaway—displayed prominently, along with an array of energetic museumgoers and an introductory paragraph. The second spread comprises chunked text and smaller illustrations that explain the museum's origin, architecture, key exhibit items, and other related facts. Young readers interested in museum careers will appreciate spotlights on real museum workers, such as the conservator of Neil Armstrong's space suit. Welcome to your next bucket list! *—Angela Leeper*

A History of Fashion for Children.

By Celia Joicey and Dennis Nothdruft. Illus. by Rose Blake.

2025. 96p. Thames & Hudson, $22.95 (9780500653364).
Gr. 3–6. 391.

This busy British import packs a lot of kid-friendly information about fashion into pleasing, graphics-rich spreads. The book's international scope spans millennia; topics range from defining aspects (identity, social status, beauty, individuality) to how items have evolved (shirts, pants, dresses, coats and cloaks, headwear, footwear) to more modern innovations (the Industrial Revolution's mills and sewing machines, haute couture, fashion designers and salons, department stores) to present-day concerns (makers, fabrics, models, media coverage, digital design, sustainability, inclusivity). The engaging, easy text offers breezy commentary that creates social context and includes profiles of notable fashionistas and entrepreneurs (Louis XIV, Audrey Hepburn, Isaac Singer, Coco Chanel, Vivienne Westwood), quotations, and sidebars, effectively supported by archival photos and especially appealing cartoon-like illustrations. Additional support features include a multipage, illustrated timeline of inventions (8,000 BCE through 2010 CE) and glossary, but there are no notes or references. This visually appealing overview serves as an intriguing introduction to clothing and fashion and will make a great first reference for report writers—and attract plenty of browsers. *—Kathleen McBroom*

How the Ghost Army Hoodwinked Hitler: The Story of American Artistry and Deception in World War II.

By Rebecca Siegel.

2025. 176p. illus. Peachtree, $19.99 (9781682637586).
Gr. 5–8. 940.53.

While deception was once considered underhanded in war, during WWII it became an inventive way to save American troops and help win the war. Siegel researched declassified documents and photographs—many of which are included here—to deliver this detailed account of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, which came to be known as the Ghost Army. This small unit of ragtag soldiers, picked for their artistic, theatrical, imaginative, and innovative skills, was tasked with creating elaborate sets in the midst of war. With "dummy" trucks, inflatable tanks, prerecorded sound effects, bogus radio chatter, and other trickery, the Ghost soldiers could fool and misdirect Germans, allowing other American troops to carry out strategic missions. Focusing on a few of these Ghost soldiers, including Bill Blass (who became an iconic fashion designer) and Arthur Singer (who became an award-winning bird illustrator), Siegel takes readers chronologically, from D-Day to the Battle of the Bulge, through the Ghost Army's biggest deceptions, with explanations of their significant impact. This distinct take on WWII is thoroughly sourced and absorbingly written. —*Angela Leeper*

★ The Spy in the Museum: How Rose Valland Saved Art from the Nazis.

By Erin McGuire. Illus. by the author.

2025. 40p. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane, $19.99 (9781534466173). Gr. 2–5. 327.12092.

THE SPY
IN THE
MUSEUM
How Rose Valland Saved Art from the Nazis
ERIN McGUIRE

"They thought she was harmless. They underestimated her." Here McGuire directs a rare and well-earned salute to a French curator who, concealing her knowledge of German, not only stood quietly by and took careful notes as Nazi invaders looted the art collections of Paris but, as Allied armies approached, slipped the Resistance a heads-up when one last train full of crated treasures was set to depart. With the help of those notes, Valland went on, after the war, to restore an incredible 60,000 paintings, sculptures, rare books, and other works to the museums and the targeted Jewish families from which they had been stolen. In an afterword, the author acknowledges that thousands more remain missing, so "the mission continues." She also invites readers to think not about why it's important to protect art but why its suppression or destruction was so important for the Nazis (and, by implication, other authoritarian regimes). In the illustrations, Valland's small, erect figure sometimes looks ghostly as scowling Nazi soldiers scurry obliviously past, piling up artworks to carry away or, tragically, burn. But her determination and courage shine throughout. —*John Peters*

Start with a Teapot: An Unexpected Guide to the Art of Drawing.

By Enric Lax. Illus. by the author.

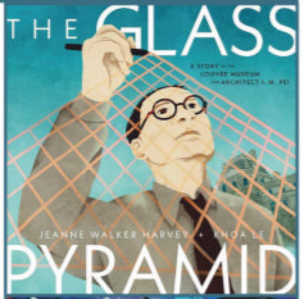
2025. 96p. Gecko, $21.99 (9798765670491). Gr. 2–6. 741.

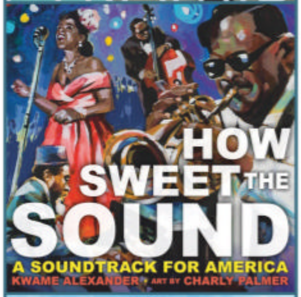
Plenty of drawing guides promise that any picture can be broken into simple shapes. Lax gleefully dismantles that logic, beginning with the solemn claim that to draw an elephant, one must first sketch . . . a teapot. Next, a horse begins with that elephant; a camel morphs into a mountain that evolves to a hat, a mouth, a sailboat. From there, the delightful absurdity unwinds relentlessly: a grasshopper turns into a stapler, a butterfly wing devolves into a eukaryotic cell. Naive ink lines and loose watercolor washes amplify the deliberately janky transformations. At first the step-by-step directions sound cheerfully earnest, but by midpoint the narration goes rogue, indulging in tangents (including a four-page treatise on poop). Occasional full-page illustrations gather the oddities—an owl, a puddle, a bicycle, buzzing flies—into cluttered tableaux. The running joke builds toward a final unraveling in which drawing a car ends in frustration and chaos, only to conclude with the oddly reassuring re-

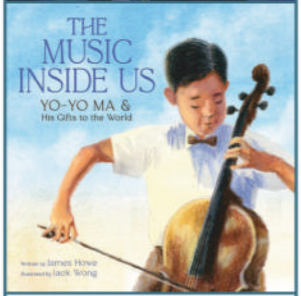
Continued on p.91

Top 10 Arts Books for Youth

Finding joy and expression through creating or performing art is a common theme among these top 10 books about the arts, reviewed in *Booklist* between October 15, 2024, and Sept 1, 2025. —*Sarah Hunter*


THE GLASS PYRAMID
A STORY OF THE LOUVRE MUSEUM AND ARCHITECT I. M. PEI
JEANNE WALKER HARVEY • KHOA LE





RA! TA! MA! CUE!
HOWIE SHIA

Candle Island. By Lauren Wolk. 2025. 352p. Dutton (9780593698549). Gr. 5–8.

Lucretia and her mother endeavor to adjust to their new life on Candle Island and find acceptance among the prickly locals.

Cat Nap. By Brian Lies. Illus. by the author. 2025. 48p. Greenwillow (9780062671288). PreS–Gr. 3.

A cat chases a mouse through a series of meticulously constructed artworks in this breathtaking book that emphasizes the delight and satisfaction of making art by hand.

The Glass Pyramid: A Story of the Louvre Museum and Architect I. M. Pei. By Jeanne Walker Harvey. Illus. by Khoa Le. 2025. 40p. Atheneum (9781665953337). Gr. 1–3.

Inviting text and airy illustrations combine in this thoughtful introduction to one of I. M. Pei's most iconic constructions, the redesigned entrance to the Louvre.

How Sweet the Sound: A Soundtrack for America. By Kwame Alexander. Illus. by Charly Palmer. 2025. 48p. Little, Brown (9780316442497). PreS–Gr. 2.

Stirring verse and exuberant artwork bring the history of American music to life, from its roots in Africa to its dynamic present.

The Music Inside Us: Yo-Yo Ma and His Gifts to the World. By James Howe. Illus. by Jack Wong. 2025. 48p. Abrams (9781419755217). K–Gr. 5.

This beautifully illustrated book introduces children to cellist Yo-Yo Ma and his hope of uniting people around the world through their music.

Ra! Ta! Ma! Cue! By Howie Shia. Illus. by the author. 2025. 72p. Annick (9781773219905). K–Gr. 3.

A group of brave children drum their way across the countryside to rescue their parents in this dynamically illustrated story about the power of rhythm.

Rap It Up! By Carole Boston Weatherford and Jeffrey Boston Weatherford. Illus. by Ernel Martinez. 2025. 32p. Holt (9781250833570). K–Gr. 3.

This cheery knockout, featuring vivid, energetic, graffiti-filled collages, celebrates the joy of writing and performing original rap pieces.

The Reel Wish. By Yamile Saied Méndez. 2025. 368p. Lee & Low/Tu (9781643796437). Gr. 4–8.

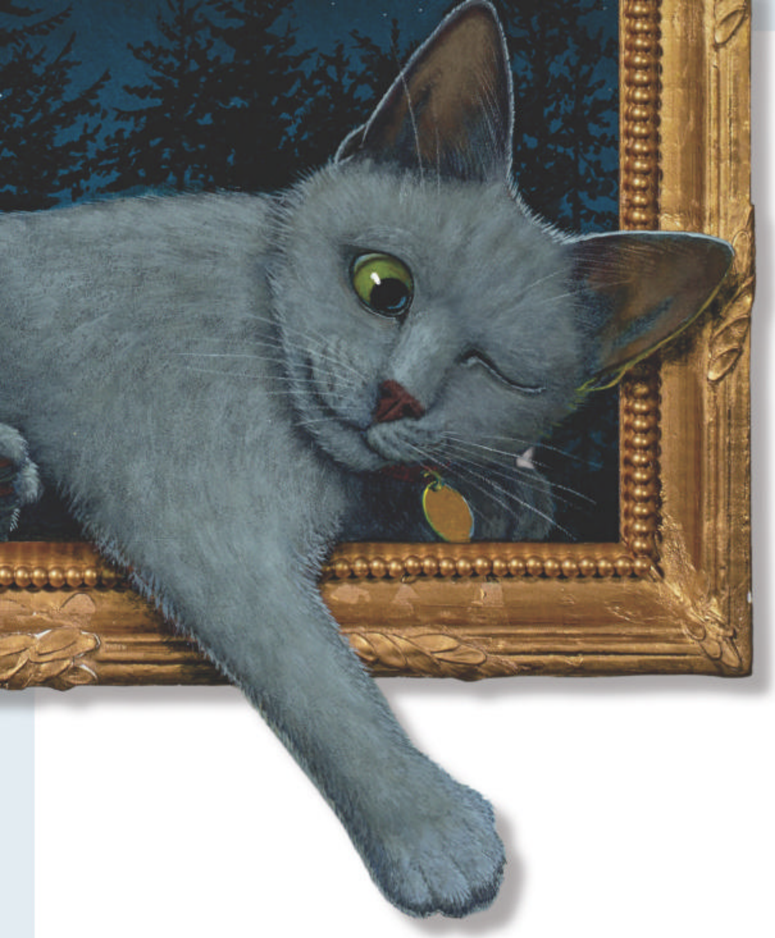
When Flor has a panic attack during her opening-night performance, it takes careful work and a new way of appreciating dance for her to find joy in the art form again. Also available in Spanish.

The Story of My Anger. By Jasminne Mendez. 2025. 336p. Dial (9780593531877). Gr. 8–12.

Increasingly furious over acts of racial prejudice, Yulieta turns to guerrilla theater to incite social change. Simultaneously released in a Spanish edition by Mendez.

Vanished: Seven Women Magicians Who Simply Disappeared. By Anna Hays. Illus. by Mary Kate McDevitt. 2025. 240p. Random/Bright Matter (9780593712559). Gr. 4–7.

Mystery, wonder, and magic await in this biography of seven women who took life and the stage on their own terms.



Talking With: Brian Lies

by Sarah Hunter

Mixed media

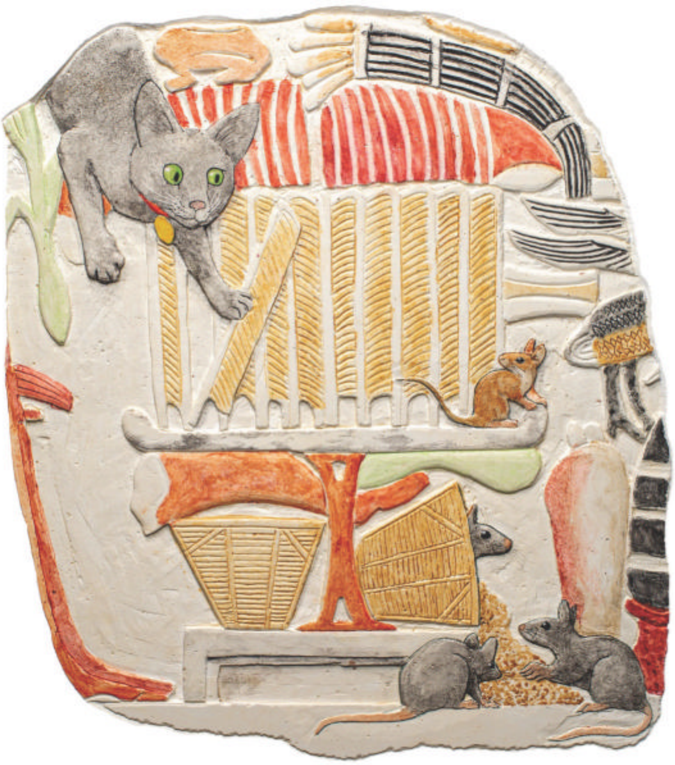
Author/illustrator Brian Lies is well known for his expressive paintings, such as in the Caldecott Honor book *The Rough Patch* (2018), but *Cat Nap*—one of our Top 10 Arts Books for Youth—is a big departure from his usual techniques. There are still paintings in his signature style, of course, but the bulk of the illustration is composed of captivating recreations of artworks from the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Some are paintings, but there's also bas-relief, wood carving, gilded rococo frames, and stained glass—all of which Lies made by hand. It's a playful introduction to art history but also a staggering work of creativity. Read on for more insight into Lies' techniques and inspiration, as well as the importance of encouraging kids to value the process of making art, not just the finished product.

Hunter: ***The illustrations in this book are unlike anything you've published before; what inspired this new medium—or, more accurately, media?***

Lies: Like most stories, *Cat Nap* grew out of an idea. Our Russian blue mix cat, Dylan, disappeared one day, and we searched through the entire house for him, worried that he'd gotten outside. We didn't find him, but a few hours later, he sauntered into the room, his whiskers covered with cobwebs. We joked that he'd found a wormhole in time and space and then thought he'd traveled back to ancient Egypt, where cats were revered.

That morphed into a question: Could that journey be the basis for a picture book? It would be fun to have him interacting with Egyptian art! The more I thought about the idea, the more ambitious it became. People have told stories of a character interacting with art before, but a really fun challenge would be to remake the pieces of art the character interacts with *in the original materials*, or as close as I could get. I broadened the concept so that Kitten (as he's known in the book) meets a variety of artworks in 2D and 3D, from as wide a cultural range as could fit in a picture book.

When I was at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, doing my post-undergrad work, there was a course on early art techniques, including egg tempera and gilding. It sounded fascinating—wouldn't it be cool to know how to do those things?



But I was driven to improve my drawing and painting skills, and I didn't feel the freedom to experiment with "side courses." I've always regretted not taking that course . . . and now I have, in an independent study sort of way.

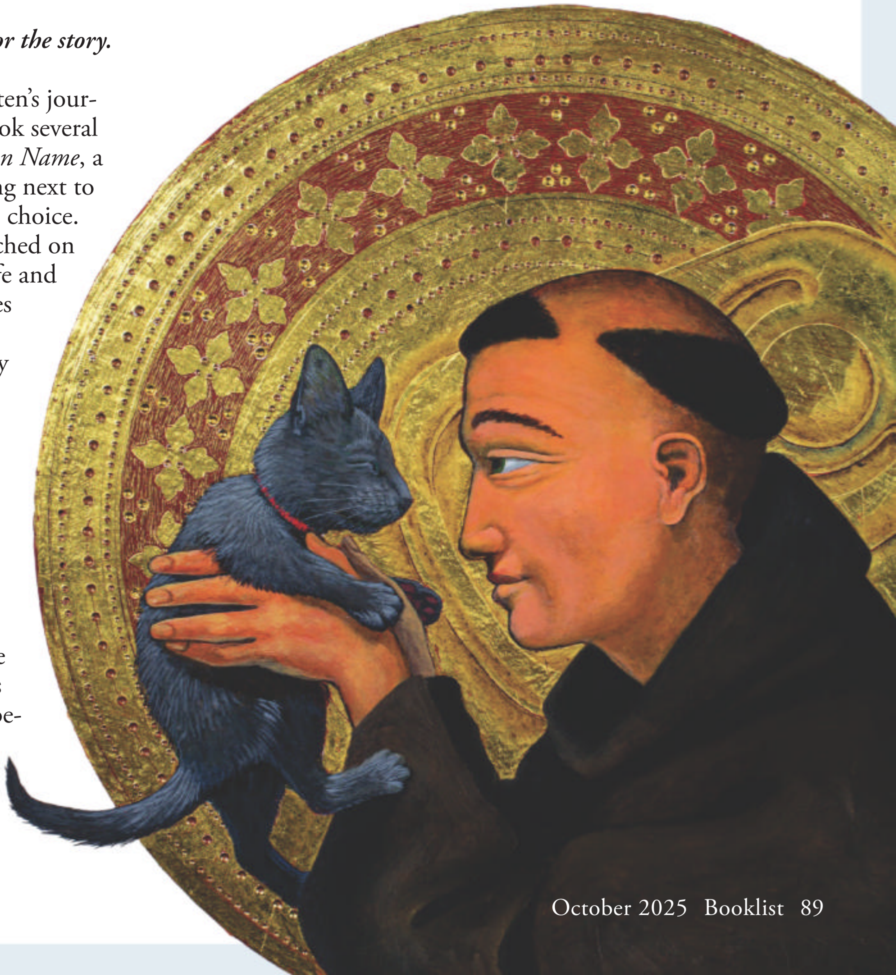
Hunter: ***You picked an intriguing variety of works for the story. What specifically drew you to those artworks?***
Lies: When I'd decided that the "setting" for the Kitten's journey would be The Metropolitan Museum of Art, I took several trips there, just searching for pieces I liked. *Emma Van Name*, a delightfully weird 1805 portrait of a little girl standing next to an enormous goblet full of berries, was an immediate choice. So was the Mblo Portrait Face Mask, with a bird perched on a woman's head, because the bird seemed so full of life and about to talk. I did initially choose a number of pieces that I ended up leaving out—one was Degas' famous sculpture *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans*, partially because the girl in the tutu is so recognizable that it almost felt like a cliché or a parody to have Kitten interacting with her. And that sculpture alone would have taken me many months to recreate.

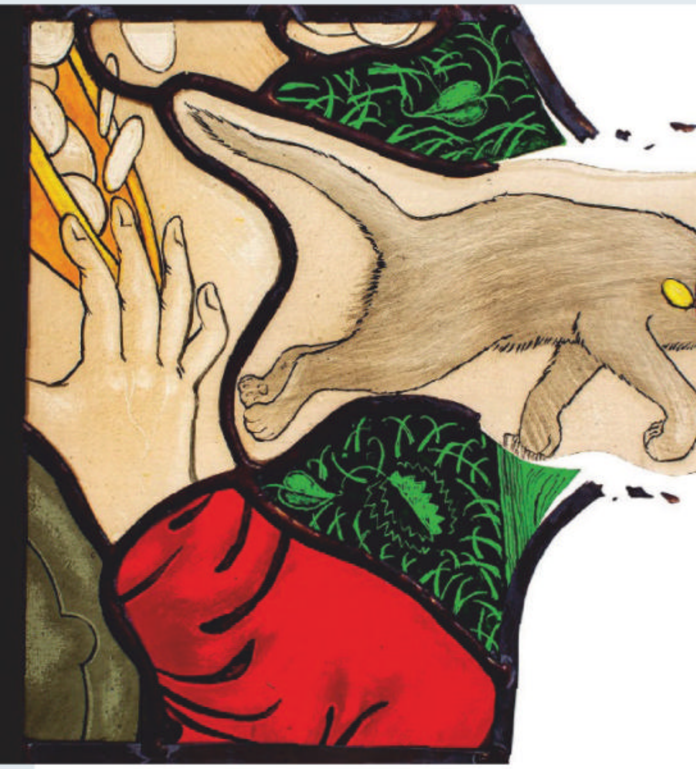
I also wanted Kitten's experience—and my own in creating the images—to be as varied as possible, so I selected pieces created in different media and reflecting different cultures. Art is something made by practically all cultures, so I didn't want the pieces represented to be just Western paintings. I wasn't able to reflect all art traditions, but my hope was that kids might see something in the book they've never seen before or something outside of their concept of art, and then add that to their understanding of what art can be.

Hunter: Play *is not a word people often associate with art museums, but you're clearly having so much fun at the art museum; what do you think people miss out on when they take art museums too seriously?*
Lies: I think art museums can be approached in many ways—as a place to study psychology and the history of human thoughts and practices and a place to take simple joy in elemental things like color and texture and flights of fancy. Museums can seem starchy and forbidding (and sometimes they HAVE to be—I once witnessed a man picking with his pinky fingernail at the thick paint of Jamie Wyeth's 1970 *Portrait of Pig* at the Brandywine Museum!!!). But as long as you're behaving properly, the experience of visiting a museum can be playful, especially with kids. It's the ideal location for a killer game of "I Spy with My Little Eye!"

Hunter: ***How long did it take you to make all of these pieces? And which was the hardest to learn how to make?***
Lies: I'd been thinking about the story for a decade, but the planning, writing, and sketching took place over several years. When it was finally time to dive into the final illustration pieces, my best guess is nine solid months. I started on the final art early in 2024 and was working seven days a week by April. From there, it was an obsessive sprint through to late October, when the 3D work was complete. But then there were several more months of "administrative" stuff, tweaking pieces and design with Paul Zakris, the art director at Greenwillow (who did more than is usually asked of art directors on this one). But it was really engaging work, and I think I had more fun with all of the different techniques than I've had since high school, when *all* of art-making was new.

I worked on multiple pieces simultaneously—my wife, Laurel, and I called it "crabwalking," because I had elements of pieces all over the house, and I scuttled back and forth among them, moving them forward. I might be working on casting silicone molds





for the egg-and-dart detail of *Emma Van Name*'s ornate frame, gluing up blanks for the Mblo portrait mask, and firing a batch of painted glass pieces for the stained glass, all on a single day.

The pieces I was most worried about were the Mblo portrait mask and Kitten talking with it. I haven't done a lot of 3D sculptural work, and the only woodcarving I've ever done was whittled with a Boy Scout pocketknife. With clay, you can always add on to the piece, but with carving, it's subtractive, so if you haven't planned well, you're either trying to make a piece too large for your original wooden blank, or you hack away something you meant to leave. It was magical when the mask began to transform from a clunky, misshapen thing to something getting close to my reference photos of the real mask. And applying the dark dye to the wood felt magical, as if something I'd done morphed into something someone else had done.

Hunter: **Cat Nap** ***has an excellent author's note emphasizing the importance of finding satisfaction and joy in the process of learning to make art, even if you're not great at it at the start. I'm sure you've felt this way about making art for a long time, so why was it important to add that note to this book in particular?***

Lies: My editor, Virginia Duncan, suggested the "how it was made" note. "Otherwise, people will think it was just done on the computer," she said. It's important to me that young readers know this stuff was all *made* by me, not *prompted* in an image generator, because I firmly believe that if someone like me could make the artworks in the book, other people can, too. And while having something to show that you're proud of is important, the kind of engagement and joy you get from *making* the thing is vital. If you're not engaged, you're going to give up before you finish it. And saying, "I did this!" about something computer-generated feels very hollow to me. The computer did it, not us.

Hunter: ***How can we encourage kids looking at art to change their thinking from "I could never do that" to "I want to try doing that!"?***

Lies: I think one way is to ask kids questions like, "How do you think the artist made this? What would *you* do differently if you made this? Can you think of anything you'd add or take away?" Another way is to make art materials easily available to kids—give them a whole ream of inexpensive printer paper to do whatever they want with. Make an art-friendly space in the house. Let the kids get bored by turning off the screens. I think if we're constantly amused by TV and phones and computers, there's no impetus to be creative. Much of my early creativity came out of boring summer days, when the only thing to do was make stuff up. You've got to create a void for kids to fill with their own thoughts and inspiration.

One other challenge is that if we adults don't make things ourselves, if we think "heck—I can't even draw a stick figure!" it will be even harder to encourage our kids to do the things we're not comfortable doing. That's where librarians come in—there are endless inspiring "how to" books out there and books showing art in a colorful way. And it's important to just let kids *play* with art materials, as well as talking with them about what they made and encouraging their experimentation rather than giving hollow praise (kids *know* it doesn't really look like a lion!). It doesn't have to be good, but it has to be *started*. It takes time to arrive at that proud moment of "I made that!"

Continued from p.87

minder: drawing, like cooking tortillas or whistling, never works right the first time. A witty, absurdist send-up for doodlers and joke-lovers alike. —*Rebecca Thornburgh*

XO Ballerina Big Sis.

By Tiler Peck. Illus. by Sumiti Collina.

Oct. 2025. 192p. DK, $16.99 (9780593969090). Gr. 3–7. 792.8.

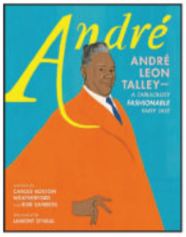
New York City Ballet principal dancer Tiler Peck shares her considerable wisdom and experience in this frank but encouraging guide for young dancers. Born of Peck's Instagram advice videos, which she would sign off with "XO Ballerina Big Sis," this book dips into class etiquette, mindset and mental health, self-care, and attending summer intensives. Peck maintains a supportive tone throughout while also reminding readers that they'll only get from class what they put into it. Unlike most ballet guides for young readers, this does not endeavor to teach ballet. Rather, kids who already love dancing will learn how to be respectful and disciplined in class, how to maintain a healthy level of competition, how to deal with (and hopefully avoid) injuries, and how to appropriately fuel their bodies. Simple illustrations add to the chummy feel of the book, and a wonderful insider section, "Tiler's Hacks and Tips," offers tons of practical advice. Whether pursuing a career with a ballet company or dreaming of Broadway, readers of this guide will move toward their goals with surer footing. —*Julia Smith*

Young Nonfiction

André: André Leon Talley—A Fabulously Fashionable Fairy Tale.

By Carole Boston Weatherford and Rob Sanders. Illus. by Lamont O'Neal.

Nov. 2025. 56p. Holt, $19.95 (9781250887283). K–Gr. 3. 746.92092.



Fashion king Talley is brought to tender, glorious life by the award-winning team of Weatherford and Sanders (*A Song for the Unsung*, 2022), who take readers into the late *Vogue* editor's young life and journey to fame. Raised in Jim Crow–era North Carolina, Talley didn't fit in in many ways. His was a world of contrasts: prejudice and bullying outside, deep love from his grandmother at home. Kind treatment in church ("André's first fashion show") but "unwanted touches from grown-ups who swore him to silence" (an author's note offers contact information for organizations that help abused children). Talley created a life revolving around his love of everything French—a world gorgeously rendered by fashion illustrator O'Neal, whose compositions show the sharply dressed, 6'6" Talley as a majestic, towering paragon of style—and his genius and determination led him to fashion heights, including a string of firsts as a Black man at *Vogue*. Weatherford and Sanders affectionately celebrate Talley's rise from a boy obsessed with fashion magazines to an important, sought-after style icon while not shying away from the prejudice he faced along the way. Another stellar profile from Weatherford and Sanders that belongs in any picture-book biography section. —*Henrietta Thornton*

The Chemistry Between Art and Science.

By Jen White. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Holiday, $18.99 (9780823459698). K–Gr. 3. 701.

In this thoughtful, visually rich book, two children discover how interconnected the worlds of science and art are through exploring a dinosaur museum, studying bees, and learning about outer space. The vibrant illustrations effectively show how the two seemingly different fields actually complement each other, bringing visual interest to a fairly informative text. The various examples of scientific topics are engaging, and the way in which art is woven into each one helps show that creativity and curiosity go hand in hand. The structure of the book naturally encourages students to explore scientific topics through artistic expression and to see the creative possibilities in scientific observation, making this a title recommended for libraries looking to include more STEAM titles in their collections, as well as classrooms in need of a great addition to lesson plans combining science with art. —*Kirsten Caldwell*

Liftoff! How the Apollo Moon Missions Made Alma Thomas's Art Soar.

By Nina Crews. Illus. by the author.

Nov. 2025. 32p. Lerner/Millbrook, $19.99 (9798765643471). K–Gr. 3. 759.13.

"Alma Thomas is an abstract artist," meaning, "she takes in impressions that she observes and then expresses those things in a picture." Thomas' signature technique involves "dashes of bright, bold colors in straight and curved lines," which she applies to a new painting inspired by something she saw on TV the year before. Alternating between the 1969 Apollo 10 space mission and Thomas' creation of *Snoopy Sees a Sunrise* in her studio, the story allows readers to appreciate how a view of Earth offered by the NASA astronauts led to an iconic, impressionistic masterpiece. "Alma's stripes" dance like confetti across digitally illustrated pages, while numerous quotes and a blend of tenses bring an immediacy and an intimacy to the text. Hefty back matter on Thomas and the Apollo missions, the mission's connection to Snoopy (with a subtle reference to Charlie Brown in the endpapers), source notes, and suggested further reading make this a great pick for STEAM content areas. An inspired look at the creative intersection of art and science. —*Kit Ballenger*

That Swingin' Sound! The Musical Friendship of Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong.

By Rekha S. Rajan. Illus. by Ken Daley.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane, $19.99 (9781665957038). K–Gr. 3. 780.92.

Ella Fitzgerald endured a turbulent childhood, spent some time in an orphanage in the Bronx as a teen, and yearned to be a dancer. Louis Armstrong grew up struggling, as well, and wanted to be a singer, performing on street corners and piers in New Orleans. This captivating dual picture-book biography shows how twists of fate made Fitzgerald a singer and Armstrong a trumpet player, two of the most celebrated musicians of the twentieth century who, ultimately, performed together. It also, through text and vibrant illustrations, illuminates the raucous, joyous feel of the clubs and theaters, big and small, of the Jazz Age of the 1920s and '30s, along with Fitzgerald's and Armstrong's distinctive styles. The first life-changing event highlighted in the book was Fitzgerald entering a talent contest at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. She intended to dance, but the dancers who came just before her were so good that she switched to singing—and wowed the audience. Armstrong's big chance came in reform school when a teacher handed him a cornet to play. The digital illustrations, with dancing figures, curving piano keyboards, and notes that seem to bounce off the page, evoke modernist artist Archibald Motley Jr.'s famous *Nightlife* painting of a jazz club. A wonderful introduction to two jazz greats and their time. —*Connie Fletcher*

Older Fiction

Beautiful Brutal Bodies.

By Linda Cheng.

Nov. 2025. 336p. Roaring Brook, $20.99 (9781250865816). Gr. 9–12.

After several of her fans mysteriously die during one of her livestreams, guilt weighs heavily on young singer-songwriter Tian. It doesn't help that, due to an unusual affliction, she's rarely allowed to leave her guardian's estate. So when her usually austere auntie recommends a restorative retreat on an island near Hong Kong, she jumps at the opportunity. Accompanied by Liya, her devoted but distant best friend and bodyguard, and Shenyu, her enthusiastic songwriting partner, Tian looks forward to a restful reprieve from her restrictive life. Once there, however, they begin to suspect that the surreally serene resort and its congregation of attendants might be more cult than commune—and they may harbor sinister intentions toward the group of friends.

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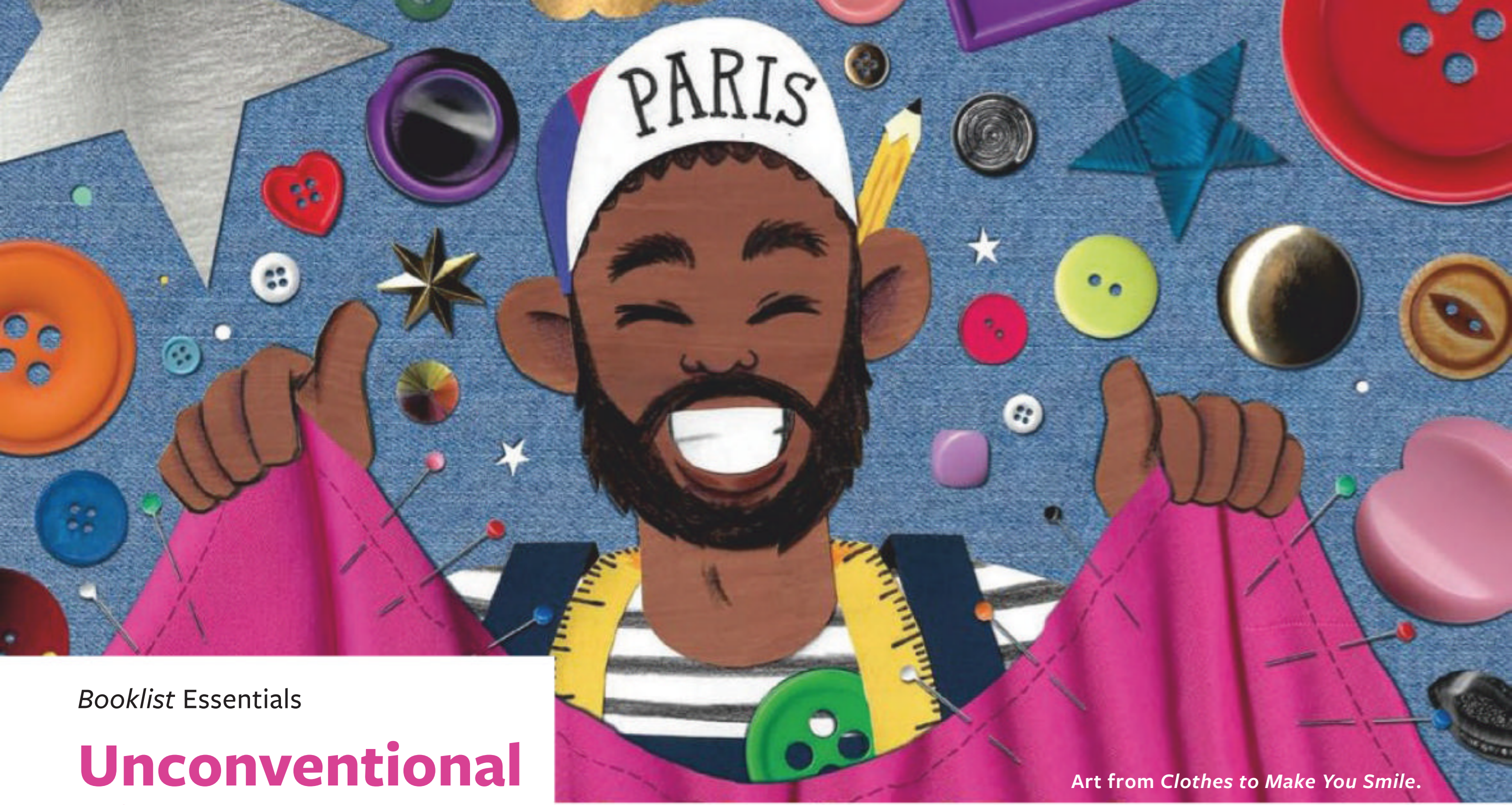


Art from *Clothes to Make You Smile.*

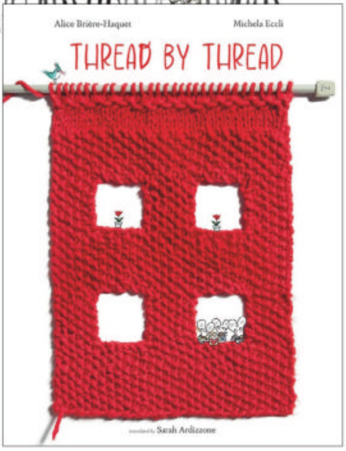
Booklist Essentials

Unconventional Picture-Book Illustrations

by Kelly Ferreira

The world of picture books is filled with impressive artistry, but some illustrators take it even further, employing uncommon techniques and materials, such as collage, found objects, fiber arts, photographed dioramas, hand-dyed fabric, and more. That creativity is on full display in this collection of titles showcasing some of the innovative methods illustrators use to create captivating artwork.

The Kite Collector
Zoey Abbott



An American Story. By Kwame Alexander. Illus. by Dare Coulter. 2023. 56p. Little, Brown (9780316473125). Gr. 3–6.

Coulter's clay sculptures, superimposed against painted wood backgrounds, add depth and realism to images depicting the brutally honest history of American slavery.

The Blue House. By Phoebe Wahl. Illus. by the author. 2020. 40p. Knopf (9781984893369). PreS–Gr. 3.

Vibrant illustrations, created with watercolor, gouache, colored pencil, and collage, feature deep colors and expressive drawings of characters struggling with the prospect of moving to a new home.

Chidori: A Story of One Thousand Birds. By Jennifer Maruno. Illus. by Miki Sato. 2025. 36p. Pajama (9781772783162). Gr. 1–6.

The 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan is captured with raw clarity in Sato's three-dimensional paper-collage illustrations of a child's experience, featuring delicate sumi-e ink brushstrokes, textiles, and embroidery silk.

Clothes to Make You Smile: Patrick Kelly Designs His Dreams. By Eric Darnell Pritchard. Illus. by Shannon Wright. 2026. 48p. Abrams (9781419768866). PreS–Gr. 3.

This forthcoming biography of vibrant, avant garde Kelly and his humble beginnings in Mississippi is well-supplemented with scenes depicted in collage of cardstock, paint, pencils, buttons, fabric, yarn, and magazine clippings.

Farmhouse. By Sophie Blackall. Illus. by the author. 2022. 48p. Little, Brown (9780316528948). K–Gr. 3.

Blackall salvaged materials from an abandoned farmhouse—including wallpaper, newspapers, paper bags, clothing, string, and more—to supplement the collages featured in this homage to the lifetime of a beloved home.

How to Read a Book. By Kwame Alexander. Illus. by Melissa Sweet. 2019. 32p. Harper (9780062307811). PreS–Gr. 3.

This mesmerizing ode to reading by a multi-award-winning team features intricate collage using an array of materials, including text and images from the original *Bambi* novel, old book covers, and more, as well as a gatefold and die-cut page for expanding enthusiasm.

I Am a Meadow Mermaid. By Kallie George. Illus. by Elly MacKay. 2023. 32p. Tundra (9780735271371). PreS–Gr. 2.

Photographed paper dioramas capture the fluid movement and depth of the grassy fields the protagonist glides through as she pretends to be a mermaid embarking on a variety of ocean-themed adventures.

The Kite Collector. By Zoey Abbott. Illus. by the author. 2025. 32p. Kids Can (9781525312526). PreS–Gr. 2.

James is a kite connoisseur with a penchant for perfection, but his baby sister is known to wreak havoc in her desire to be included, captured with sketches and risograph printing imposed on multimedia and cut-paper collage.

The Knight of Little Import. By Hannah Batsel. Illus. by the author. 2023. 40p. Carolrhoda (9781728450995). K–Gr. 3.

Charlie's knightly escapades throughout her tiny town of Little Import are captured through a mesmerizing display of mixed-media collage, using handmade and purchased paper, paints, ink, watercolors, artificial turf, and more, rich with depth and texture on every page.

The Museum of Everything. By Lynne Rae Perkins. Illus. by the author. 2021. 40p. Greenwillow (9780062986306). K–Gr. 2.

Perkins throws everything at the wall to convey a museum of things that fill a child with wonder, including photographed 3D models that produce the look of a dollhouse (crafted with sand, stone, wood, moss, wool, and more) and more traditionally painted spreads.

My Beautiful Birds. By Suzanne Del Rizzo. Illus. by the author. 2017. 32p. Pajama (9781772780109). Gr. 1–3.

A young boy worries about the pigeons he cared for as his family flees his war-torn home, with intricate, texturally sculpted clay artwork capturing the child's heavy emotions and connection to birds.

My Bed: Enchanting Ways to Fall Asleep Around the World. By Rebecca Bond. Illus. by Salley Mavor. 2020. 40p. Clarion (9780544949065). PreS–Gr. 2.

Mavor's wonderfully detailed, diorama-like scenes are created with textiles, beads, wood, and wire and richly, meticulously embellished with embroidery to depict the scope of sleeping traditions around the world.

My Indigo World: A True Story of the Color Blue. By Rosa Chang. Illus. by the author. 2023. 40p. Astra/Minedition (9781662650659). K–Gr. 3.

The combination of watercolor paint and digitally rendered, hand-dyed indigo fabric perfectly supplements this guide to the history and variety of indigo dying practices, ranging from Japanese shibori and sashiko techniques to Korean bojagi cloths and more.

Nina: A Story of Nina Simone. By Traci N. Todd. Illus. by Christian Robinson. 2021. 56p. Putnam, $18.99 (9781524737283). Gr. 1–3.

Robinson's illustrations subtly portray Nina Simone's gradual move from more subdued dresses to her bold, colorful, and Afrocentric signature style throughout her eventful life in acrylic paint, collage, and "a bit of digital manipulation."

Nothing Special. By Desiree Cooper. Illus. by Bec Sloane. 2022. 40p. Wayne State Univ. (9780814349731). PreS–Gr. 3.

This evocative work celebrates simple pleasures and is an homage to southbound summer journeys that many Black families make, depicted with three-dimensional characters and settings made entirely from repurposed fabrics and found objects.

There Was a Party for Langston. By Jason Reynolds. Illus. by Jerome Pumphrey and Jarrett Pumphrey. 2023. 56p. Atheneum (9781534439443). Gr. 1–3.

The Pumphrey brothers created hundreds of stamps by hand to compose the illustrations for this book, which celebrates a real party at New York Public Library's Schomburg Center, where Black authors partied in honor of the great Langston Hughes.

Thread by Thread. By Alice Brière-Haquet. Illus. by Michela Eccli. Tr. by Sarah Ardizzone. 2025. 32p. Eerdmans (9780802856395). K–Gr. 3.

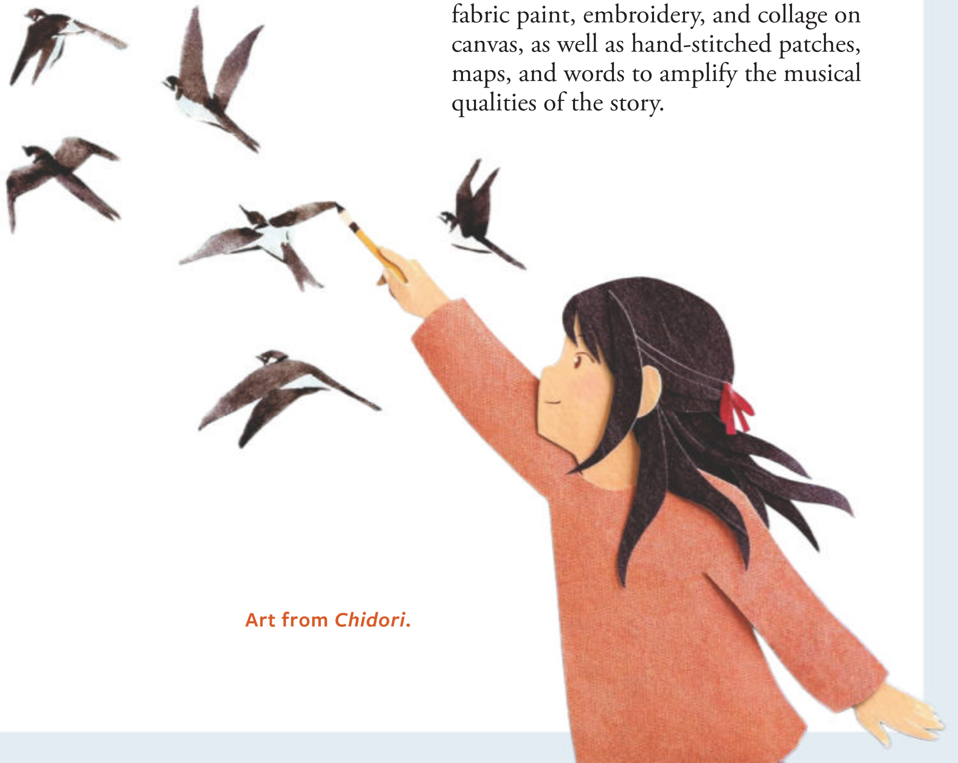
Eccli uses real knitting needles and yarn mixed with colored-pencil drawings to capture the experience of immigration from one home to another and how pieces of our old homes (literal and figurative) stay with and guide us.

Wolfboy. By Andy Harkness. Illus. by the author. 2021. 40p. Bloomsbury (9781547604425). PreS–Gr. 2.

Harkness harnesses his impressive animation career to share the story of a hungry little wolf, painstakingly created with hand-formed clay and then photographed to yield textural and 3D images with striking use of shadow and light.

Yellow Dog Blues. By Alice Faye Duncan. Illus. by Chris Raschka. 2022. 32p. Eerdmans (9780802855534). K–Gr. 3.

Though the premise of a boy in search of his lost dog is simple, the execution is so much more in this exploration of blues music, captured with a combination of fabric paint, embroidery, and collage on canvas, as well as hand-stitched patches, maps, and words to amplify the musical qualities of the story.


Art from *Chidori*.

Continued from p.91

The resolute trio must uncover their connection to the ethereal island before their bodies are brutally sacrificed to its legend. Cheng explores themes of love, legacy, and the redemptive act of letting go in this sapphic follow-up to *Gorgeous Gruesome Faces* (2023). Perfect for fans of Trang Thanh Tran's *She Is a Haunting* (2023) and E. Latimer's *The Afterdark* (2025). —*Ricardo Reading*

The Devouring Light.

By Kat Ellis.

Oct. 2025. 368p. Harper, paper, $15.99 (9780063355248). Gr. 9–12.

When Haden Romero's band, Phantomic, is billed for the Rock-o'-Lantern music festival (even if it's bottom of the bill), she and her bandmate, Kizi, are amped. At least, they were—until they find themselves stranded at a rest stop and forced into carpooling with the band Rex Mori, led by singer Deacon Rex, Haden's mortal enemy. And Rex Mori's newest drummer? Haden's ex-bandmate and ex-partner, Cairo. As though things couldn't get any worse, the tour bus crashes and lands in sulfuric swampland, and forced to take shelter in a dilapidated manor, the bands must work together to survive the night. Alongside all the trouble, Haden, Deacon, and Cairo must also manage their old wounds conflicting with new ones. Whatever caused their crash and whoever (or whatever) is stalking the house and picking them off one by one defies reality. Will these bands battle to survive? That said, the book opens with plenty of content warnings. Still, newer readers to the horror genre will find the story punchy, the prose quippy, and the frights appropriate for the fall season. —*Sam Ponke*

Don't Forget to Breathe.

By Sara Waxelbaum and Brianna R. Shrum.

Oct. 2025. 384p. Harper, $19.99 (9781335013903). Gr. 8–12.

A pianist and a ballerina crash into each other's lives in this cowritten, lyrical romance. Hanna is a military kid transplanted to Fayetteville, North Carolina, during her senior year, only to learn that her mom is being deployed overseas imminently. Zoe is an autistic dancer whose understanding of her sexuality and hopes for the future are both upended by Hanna's arrival. But Hanna has historically struggled to form long-lasting connections and is terrified by the feelings Zoe elicits. The prose in this latest collaboration by Shrum and Waxelbaum beats rhythmically across the page and is, in a word, splendid. The two artists are surrounded by a lovable, well-rounded cast of friends and family, all of whom give the impression that they have rich inner lives and storylines of their own. Neither protagonist shies away from the sexual side of their attraction to and feelings for each other, but what really sets them apart is their messy, honest, and compelling care. A stunning sapphic romance that will settle between your ribs and linger in your heart. —*Karis Rogerson*

Final Cut.

By Olivia Worley.

Oct. 2025. 352p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $20 (9781250392985). Gr. 9–12.

Hazel "Haze" Lejeune, an 18-year-old aspiring actor, has been offered her first starring role in the B-movie slasher *Swamp Creatures*, in which a masked killer terrorizes smalltown Louisiana. Haze, a slasher-movie aficionado, is excited to play the final girl, but she's apprehensive, too: the movie is set in the same town the Pine Springs Slasher, aka "Dad," struck 15 years ago. Haze was three when her father, popular high-school teacher Cal Dupre, was imprisoned for murdering five students. Her secret should be safe, but once shooting starts, the script reveals uncomfortable parallels, and Haze starts receiving cryptic notes. Someone knows who she is, and after dangerous mishaps on set culminate in an actual death, Haze must identify the killer before this film becomes her (and her castmates') last. Worley's twisty, entertaining thriller makes good use of slasher conventions, integrating classic-film references, script excerpts, and POV chapters from the killer to build tension. Obvious red herrings mix with subtle ones, leaving Haze—and readers—guessing as the body count rises. Mystery and horror fans will find plenty to enjoy. —*Krista Hutley*

King of the Neuro Verse.

By Idris Goodwin.

Oct. 2025. 256p. Atheneum, $19.99 (9781665973120). Gr. 8–12.

Pernell is in his third year of high-school summer school, or clown college as he calls it. He has trouble focusing, what with all the ideas that swirl in his head. The only thing that gets him through the day is the cyphers—impromptu raps passed around the cafeteria at lunch time. As Pernell gets closer to becoming the cypher king, he continues to struggle in class. When his parents have him meet a doctor who diagnoses him with ADHD, Pernell begins to see the possibility for change. Told in verse from the perspective of Pernell as he records his life for people in the future, this relatable snapshot of adolescence lets readers experience Pernell's uncertainty over why he can't focus, his apprehension about medication, the ups and downs of having a crush, and his nerves at the looming "threat" of Y2K. Goodwin, himself a poet and spoken-word artist, presents an earnest take on one Black boy's struggle to understand himself, set in a world of verse that will speak to young adult readers. —*Ashley Leffel*

The Siren and the Star.

By Colby Cedar Smith.

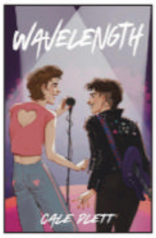
Oct. 2025. 576p. Simon & Schuster, $21.99 (9781665972178). Gr. 9–12.

Operatic prodigy and homeschooled misfit Luciana "Lula" Gabroni begins freshman year at the New England Conservatory of Music in 2025. Lula is tapped to perform at a distinguished music festival in Venice with select classmates when unexpected trauma jeopardizes her chance. In 1635 Venice, Barbara Strozzi is a servant berated and disrespected by misogynistic men at every turn. She makes a calculated wager and receives musical training with Baroque era composer Cavalli. Dual timelines formatted as three acts of an opera intertwine when Lula discovers a book about Strozzi in a Venetian library. Smith expertly uses the setting of Venice as a character, with lush descriptions of food, fabrics, and surroundings using multiple senses and lyrical poetry. Based on Strozzi's real life, this fictionalized version addresses the cage of patriarchy as Lula's and Barbara's stories focus on finding your voice and female empowerment. Though the book clocks in at 576 pages, its white space makes it less daunting. This atmospheric, visceral verse novel will appeal to readers of Joy McCullough's *Blood Water Paint* (2018), fans of strong female protagonists, and lovers of the arts. —*Lisa Krok*

★ Wavelength.

By Cale Plett.

Oct. 2025. 408p. Groundwood, paper, $17.99 (9781779460295). Gr. 9–12.



Sasha is on the run. More appropriately, teen pop sensation Alexander Ash (Sasha's alter ego) is on the run following a media scandal involving his older brother, the other half of his pop duo; Sasha Weaver, on the other hand, is coming into their own, unsupervised and free from PR managers in a new city. They are quickly befriended by Quinn, transmasculine to their nonbinary, and are introduced to Quinn's band, Wavelength, which includes newly brokenhearted lead singer and punk bisexual disaster, Lillian. Lillian's chronic emotional instability combined with Sasha's rapidly building mound of identity-protecting lies means that watching the relationship between the two ignite is akin to watching an impending train wreck, even as the flowing prose and plot compassionately portray everything simultaneously beautiful and catastrophic about queer teenage self-discovery. Included in this portrayal is the choice to capture gender euphoria rather than dysphoria. There are also several moments that are earnestly melodramatic in a way that rings true to the nuanced, if not always likable, POV characters of Sasha and Lillian. Although there is significant suspension of disbelief required for the premise to work—simultaneously helped and hindered by the narrative's refusal to provide a concrete physical setting—overall, this is a clear reflection of a very specific type of queer experience that is often overlooked in YA literature. —*Austin Ferraro*

Middle Fiction

Ballet Besties: Yara's Chance to Dance.

By Yasmine Naghdi and Chitra Soundar. Illus. by Paula Franco.

2025. 224p. Candlewick, $16.99 (9781536243796). Gr. 3–5.

Yara wants nothing more than to dance ballet in a real class with other dancers. After years of online lessons between her family's constant moves, she joins Shimmer and Shine, a local studio. There she meets new friends, stars in *The Sleeping Beauty*, and eventually helps save her beloved new home-away-from-home from a sullen landlady bent on shutting it down. This delightful first-in-a-series chapter book will appeal to ballet enthusiasts just like Yara. When her parents pull her out of ballet for a week over her suffering schoolwork, though, the theme of teamwork (Yara's friends help her with homework and keeping up with choreography) is a welcome sidestep in the plot. Simple vocabulary in paragraphs broken up by black-and-white illustrations throughout makes for a pleasant pace; a glossary, demonstrations of ballet basics, and a recipe make up some of the extensive back matter. Yara and her friends' excitement surrounding their performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* and around ballet in general is infectious—don't be surprised if young readers begin practicing their pas de chat after reading! *—Jessica Durham*

Bravo for Backstage!

By Mary Rand Hess and Randy Preston. Illus. by Marilena Perilli.

2025. 40p. Free Spirit, $18.99 (9798885544030). Gr. 2–5.

Readers get a behind-the-scenes look at what goes into putting on a play as well as dealing with disappointment when the lead role Oscar auditions for goes to another student. He's dismayed, but his teacher tells him she has the perfect role for him to play: stage manager. Ms. Brown explains the magic of backstage, including managing the actors and other crew members, as she shows Oscar all the props, paint cans, and tools needed to make the production possible. The classmates and adults in Oscar's life are all supportive, and with their encouragement, he accepts a role he didn't know he wanted. Perilli uses a colorful palette to create expressive, wide-eyed characters. Illustrations of Oscar stitching a torn costume and pulling curtain cords show rather than tell the duties of a stagehand. Throughout the book, vignettes appear with accompanying lyrics that correspond to a musical performance kit available online. Oscar and his family are cued as Hispanic. A satisfying look at how those who perform behind the scenes are just as essential as those on center stage. *—Michelle Proper*

Cast vs. Crew: Setting the Stage.

By Lindsay Champion.

Oct. 2025. 208p. Pixel+Ink, $18.99 (9781645953289). Gr. 5–8.

Five personalities come together with their own varying drama backstage, showcasing the dynamics of a musical production from the perspective of the stage crew. There's Ella, an aspiring stage manager who dreams of managing national tours; her best friend, Levi, who assists with stage crew; siblings Rosa, the lead actress, and Sebastian, a sixth-grader new to crew; and Willow, a girl who just moved from New York and wants nothing to do with the show but is forced into volunteering as a detention sentence. Aside from the show drama and the ongoing prank war between cast and crew, each character has personal struggles to deal with as well. Levi is in foster care and wonders if he could ever belong, Rosa secretly struggles with dyslexia, Ella is overly relied on by her parents, and Sebastian has a burgeoning crush on Levi, who, in return, is crushing on Rosa. While this series starter frustratingly stops midway through with a "to be continued," theater fans are sure to devour the theatrics on and off the stage. *—Sarah Bean Thompson*

Quentin Blake's Fantastic Journeys: Fanciful Drawings & Surprising Situations.

By Quentin Blake. Illus. by the author.

2025. 64p. Candlewick Studio, $19.99 (9781536245080). Gr. 2–5.

From the creator of some of the most iconic children's-book illustrations ever made comes a collection of drawings that are a culmination of his career. Blake begins with an author's note that describes his artistic journey from sketchbook to final page. His lifelong work of creating sequential illustrations for popular book titles, such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Witches*, has now become a "habit" in which he uses the "same characters to explore the possibilities of the situation." The collection of illustrations in this book features a variety of characters doing silly actions. These include an old woman skateboarding over a crowd of people, a monster delivering a birthday card from the mountains, and a mouse on a tricycle. His penmanship and minimal shading create a unique sense of movement that brings these stories to life. What began as "an act of pure self-indulgence" is now a set of fantastical illustrations that will inspire artists everywhere and remind readers to never stop using their imagination. *—Eori Tokunaga*

Young Fiction

The Bear Who Wanted to Dance.

By Stephanie Stansbie. Illus. by Wendy J. Warren.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Tiger Tales, $18.99 (9781664300767). PreS–Gr. 1.

In a first-person account, young brown bear Rita reminisces about the time she attended a ballet and how it changed her life. She joins a dance class led by Monsieur le Fox and becomes friends with a fellow dancer named Wanda. When the instructor announces he will be holding auditions to find the company's prima ballerina, Rita and Wanda spend their time leading up to the audition practicing and dreaming of a lifetime of ballet. Rita is worried sick about auditioning since, for the first time, she notices that her bear body type is different from other dancers, all of whom are slender creatures of other species. Still, dedication, practice, and a positive attitude assist Rita in making her dream a reality. Youngsters will enjoy the softly hued watercolors that feature the round bear cub in a pink tutu and pink ballet slippers. Endpapers reveal a variety of classic ballet positions, encouraging interested children to take their first steps toward learning dance. *—Maryann Owen*

Daddy Plays a Mean Guitar.

By Jane Yolen and Adam Stemple. Illus. by Rashin Kheiriyeh.

Jan. 2026. 32p. Reycraft, $18.95 (9781478868170). PreS–Gr. 2.

Charlie Parker Played Be Bop meets *My Papi Has a Motorcycle* in this energetic celebration of a boy's love of music and family. When the boy sleeps, his guitarist father is out performing, but from the time the boy wakes until he finally sees his dad after school, there's music in his head. Each double-spread has a rhyming quatrain, one line of which contains the music in the environment: the "yawn-yakkety-yawn yakkety yawn" of the morning's dawn chorus, the "tip-tippity-toe" of walking to school, the "vrooom, vroom zoomba-zoom" of the bus returning him home. He finds Daddy waiting, fully decked out in his shades, cowboy boots, and tight black leather, mustache drooping, guitar in tow, and the book spirals out of control with a series of rip-roaring riffs that the whole family (including the cat and dog) jams to until bedtime. Kheiriyeh conjures a tremendous amount of joy, with the child's adoration plainly visible as he imitates dad and the whole family connects over their shared love of music—and one another. *—Ronny Khuri*

The Daddy-Daughter Dance.

By Malcolm Newsome. Illus. by Jenin Mohammed.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Holt, $18.99 (9781250874382). PreS–Gr. 2.

Mona and her daddy have been dancing together since she was a baby, but today is special because the annual daddy-daughter dance is happening at the community center. Mona and her dad head out to buy Mona a dress at the shopping plaza. She also gets her nails and hair done while Daddy practices his silly dance moves. Looking good in their finest purple duds, Mona and her father arrive at the community center to find that the dance has been canceled. Disappointed, they begin walking home, but as they pass the park, Daddy turns on some music and starts to dance by the park gazebo. Pretty soon, other fathers and daughters join them, a joyful reminder of making the best of a less-than-ideal situation. Energetic collage illustrations highlight the close relationship between Mona and her father. At times, the pages look like a scrapbook, adding interesting details, such as decals, stickers, and cut paper. Mona's family is Black and beautifully shown with different skin tones, and the book further showcases diversity within the community at large. —*Ana Menchaca*

The Girl Who Wanted a Piano / La niña que quería un piano.

By Diana García. Illus. by Gabhor Utomo. Tr. by Gabriela Baeza Ventura.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Arte Publico/Piñata, $18.95 (9798893750171). K–Gr. 3.

This poignant biography of Ofelia T. Vasquez-Philo, one of the founders of El Centro Cultural Hispano, which opened in 2010 in San Marcos, Texas, follows Vasquez-Philo in her childhood as she is introduced at school to the piano and wishes her family could afford one. Instead of being able to learn to play the instrument, Vasquez-Philo spends her life pretending to play and finding solace in the beautiful music she creates in her mind. In an emotional turn, adult Vasquez-Philo decides to purchase a piano and cocreates a community space so that low-income families can have their children learn to play the piano and other musical instruments, passing down her dreams and aspirations to the next generations. This English-Spanish bilingual rendering of one woman's story, accompanied by vibrant watercolor illustrations, highlights the subject's determination and generosity as well as her love for music and her community. —*Stephanie Cohen Xu*

I Can Make a Movie!

By Morgan Stevenson Cooper. Illus. by Geneva Bowers.

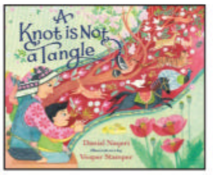
Nov. 2025. 32p. Penguin/Kokila, $18.99 (9780593858301). PreS–Gr. 2.

Written by writer, director, and two-time Tribeca Film Festival award winner Cooper, this picture book tells the story of Norah, a young Black girl from Kansas City whose passion for film is matched only by her love for family. When her grandfather falls ill and can no longer visit the movie theater, Norah decides to bring the magic of film to him by making a movie of her own. With boundless enthusiasm, she writes a script, enlists her family as cast and crew, gathers props, and starts filming. Along the way, she encounters setbacks—a nervous actor, limited equipment, and even an unexpected storm—but navigates each one with creativity and optimism. The story seamlessly blends a tender family narrative with a kid-friendly introduction to the filmmaking process, from writing and planning to filming and editing. The warm, energetic illustrations mirror Norah's vibrant spirit, making this story as visually engaging as it is heartwarming. Readers will delight in this celebration of storytelling, creativity, and the joy of sharing your passion with the people you love. —*Ziana Deen*

★ A Knot Is Not a Tangle.

By Daniel Nayeri. Illus. by Vesper Stamper.

Nov. 2025. 48p. Knopf, $18.99 (9780593809693). PreS–Gr. 3.



In the idyllic Iranian countryside, as a boy assists his grandmother in weaving a new rug, he recalls, "All of this takes weeks, but in my memory, it's one long wonderful day." A powerful sense of nostalgia anchors the text as we follow the boy on his "day" of learning and making precious memories with his grandparents. There's an overt message at work, as well, established in the title and carried on through the story as the grandmother impresses upon the boy that "nothing in this world is perfect, and nothing should pretend to be." This is reflected in the "Persian flaw," an intentional imperfection included in every rug. Happily, the embedded lesson is just one thread of many woven into the book, which also offers powerful points of wisdom from the grandmother and an introduction to a fascinating art form that will undoubtedly be new to many American readers. Stamper's softly textured watercolor artwork brings a bright, tactile beauty (and many other details) to the work, rendering rugs on the page that look soft enough to sit on. One spread showing the boy and his grandmother designing their rug on graph paper is sure to inspire arts and crafts projects at home or in the classroom. A precious intergenerational story, steeped in art, culture, and the beautiful idea of a perfect memory. —*Ronny Khuri*

Searching for Mr. Johnson's Song.

By Ariel Vanece. Illus. by Jade Orlando.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Penguin/Rocky Pond, $18.99 (9780593617816). K–Gr. 3.

Caius visits Mr. Johnson every summer morning and listens to him sing "Further Along," an American Southern gospel hymn. While Mr. Johnson cannot remember all the lyrics, his song inspires Caius to begin his search for the missing verses. Naturally, Caius searches his local library's hymns and records, and although he learns much regarding history, freedom, and dreams, the song remains a mystery. Disappointed, Caius returns home and listens to his grandmother sing a familiar song—Mr. Johnson's song—the missing lyrics timelessly echoing through the halls of the house in reverberating twists and turns. This warm, expressive picture book will leave readers with a heartwarming message brimming with benevolence. In addition to celebrating Black American music and culture, it offers a gentle portrayal of dementia that radiates warmth, from Caius's daily kindness to his eagerness to sing the forgotten final verses to Mr. Johnson. Accompanying the lyrics and fine storytelling are gouache illustrations that movingly capture Caius' quest, the history the song evokes, and a deeply embedded cultural identity conveyed in beautiful brushstrokes. —*Nick Mullenmeister*

Sometimes You Find a Dragon: Find Your Dragon. Find Your Creativity.

By Viviane Schwarz. Illus. by the author.

2025. 32p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536245110). PreS–Gr. 2.

Award-winning illustrator Schwarz uses a playful metaphor for cultivating creativity in this encouraging treatise on imagination. A cast of kids, rendered in simple, splotchy ink lines, finds dragons in a wide variety of objects—branches and leaves, swoops of watercolor, a jumble of letters, laundry drying on a line. Noticing is the first step; next, readers are instructed to "hold it carefully and look and listen to find out what it wants." From there, the dragons take more concrete shape (though still retaining the loose quality of a creation crafted by a child) and bound around the pages. Schwarz shows how creativity can come from a wide variety of places; one spread exploring inspiration from music renders the booming beats of a drum in overlapping, stamped circles of translucent paint that coalesce into a bubbly, friendly-looking dragon. With lively, light illustrations and lyrical text, this artful depiction of an esoteric set of feelings nicely captures the freewheeling, open-ended nature of creative play and invites children to find inspiration absolutely everywhere. —*Sarah Hunter*

This is Orange: A Field Trip Through Color.

By Rachel Poliquin. Illus. by Julie Morstad.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536230529). K–Gr. 2. 752.

This exploration of the color that Chaucer described as "betwixe yelow and reed" begins with the question of where the word *orange* even comes from. From there, Poliquin covers a wide range of topics related to the color orange, from the minerals historically used to make orange pigment (now we know they're poisonous!) to the variety of orange tones used in architecture (the Golden Gate Bridge; Tokyo Tower), art (Christo's iconic installation, *The Gates*), cultural dress (saffron robes in Tibet), flags, and so on. Less a systematic overview than an observational jaunt, the text meanders from topic to topic, but Morstad's lovely, warm watercolor artwork imbues the pages with a lovely sense of atmosphere, depicting close-ups of sunset-hued flowers and animals, people embracing bouquets of marigolds, monarchs fluttering, and astronauts modeling their International Orange–colored spacesuits. While it would have benefited from back matter, this pleasantly rambly book nevertheless encourages little ones to pay closer attention to the world around them and notice instances of this common color with a fascinating history. —*Sarah Hunter*

Youth Fiction

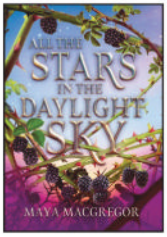
Older Readers

All the Stars in the Daylight Sky.

By Maya MacGregor.

Oct. 2025. 272p. Astra, $19.99 (9781662620980). Gr. 8–12.

Venturing out into the Scottish woods, one wouldn't expect to stumble upon another world, but folklore makes it seem possible. Cam, an agender, autistic teen tired of fighting with her mums, certainly doesn't consider it as she storms off from her Granaidh's cottage into the night after a particularly tense argument. And yet, she happens upon an unexpected path to a door in the woods and out comes Ezra, an enigmatic, charming teen with a knack for gender-affirming shapeshifting. Cam is instructed to run, and she is eventually found by the otherworldly Deirdre and Daibhidh, who present her with a choice: since she is a mortal, she can either become one of them or die. Cam chooses to become an Other, and so begins the process of learning to be magic, all while trying to manage her autism diagnosis, new school, budding relationship with Ezra, and the looming conflict of the Others that Cam's creator, Deirdre, seems to be keeping from her. Steeped in Scottish folk tales of fae (though don't use the F word with the Others) and Gaelic galore, the initial immersion into Cam's two worlds may seem a bit daunting for readers unfamiliar with the culture. But MacGregor represents Gaelic lore well while thoughtfully integrating the nuance of neurodivergence and grief throughout. A welcome, cozy queer romantasy with a uniquely informed twist on the popular fae subgenre. —*Kelly Ferreira*



And the River Drags Her Down.

By Jihyun Yun.

Oct. 2025. 400p. Knopf, $20.99 (9780593904879). Gr. 9–12.

Although Milkis the rat is not officially immortal, she has been regularly resurrected by two generations of Han women. And although Milkis doesn't seem that worse for wear, family lore warns against human resurrection—otherwise, Soojin would have brought back her recently deceased sister, Mirae, months ago. After Soojin's childhood friend Mark discovers her secret power, things spin out of control, and Soojin finds herself resurrecting Mirae after all. Initially, all is well, but Mirae, as it turns out, has both unfinished business with several people in the sleepy town of Jade Acre and the newfound ability to travel through water. This is far from your standard revenant-with-a-vengeance horror story; generational trauma and the stark consequences of incidental parentification are the subtle horrors interwoven throughout. However, there is still enough body horror and general creepiness to sate readers looking for a good ghost story. The prose itself is brilliantly crafted and contributes heavily to how emotionally real the narrative feels without being overwrought. This is a nuanced, vibes-forward experience perfect for easing readers into more emotionally mature horror. —*Austin Ferraro*

Break Wide the Sea.

By Sara Holland.

Nov. 2025. 336p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $21 (9781250854490). Gr. 9–12.

In Holland's latest fantastical tale, a species of whale—the Livyati—has amazing magical properties, and the people of Kirkrell heavily depend on the Livyati's magic and the Fairfax Whaling Company to survive. However, whaling comes at immense costs, including curses from an oceanic fae species called the finfolk. Eighteen-year-old Susannah "Annie" Fairfax, now the head of the Fairfax Whaling Company, suffers from a curse herself: should she become too heartbroken, she'll become a man-eating monster. The curse began manifesting after the death of her parents, and it's worsening due to the potential betrayal of her fiancé, August. Silas, an infamous captain with finfolk heritage, tells her there's a cure, but, like whaling, it comes at a great cost. Promises are made, lies are told, and secrets are revealed in this dark, briny YA fantasy. While it's formulaic in some aspects, it maintains suspense, and Annie, weighed down by duty and sexism, is a sympathetic protagonist. Recommended for fantasy fans, ocean lovers, and buccaneer enthusiasts. —*Bella Muniz*

Coldwire.

By Chloe Gong.

Nov. 2025. 496p. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry, $21.99 (9781665960137). Gr. 9–12.

In a NileCorp-conceived future, even cold war is played out in a virtual, largely AI-replicate space. Refugee orphans from Medaluo are effectively forced to enlist in NileCorp's armed forces after incurring substantial debt from their mandatory military academy attendance in their unenthusiastic new home in Atahua. Lia and Eirale are two such wards of the state; Lia is barely functional outside of her extended virtual stays at her prestigious academy, while Eirale has a massive gap in her memory following her own end-of-education posting. The worlds—virtual and physical—that Eirale and

High-Demand Hot List for Youth

Look for reviews of these high-demand titles in forthcoming issues of *Booklist*.

A Book of Loves. By Cynthia Rylant. Illus. by the author. 2026. 32p. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane (9781665987943). PreS–Gr. 3. Jan.

Newbery Medal winner Rylant returns to illustration with this gentle new picture book that celebrates the smaller things around us that we love.

The Dream Builder's Blueprint: Dr. King's Message to Young People. By Alice Faye Duncan. Illus. by E. B. Lewis. 2026. 32p. Astra/Calkins Creek (9781662680311). Gr. 2–5. Jan.

Two award-winning creators collaborate on this reinterpretation of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous 1967 "street sweeper" speech, presenting it as a found erasure poem.

Hattie Mae Begins Again. By Sharon G. Flake. 2026. 368p. Knopf (9780593650349). Gr. 3–7. Jan.

This historical novel in verse from three-time Coretta Scott King Honor Book author Flake follows southern Hattie as she attends an elite boarding school in Philadelphia during the Great Migration.

The Mighty Macy. By Kwame Alexander. Illus. by Kitt Thomas. 144p. Little, Brown (9780316442169). Gr. 1–5. Feb.

Renowned Alexander debuts an early-chapter-book series with the story about third-grader Macy, who is troubled when her library drastically reduces its hours but finds strength in poetry and her friends to speak up.

The Rare Bird. By Elisha Cooper. Illus. by the author. 40p. Roaring Brook (9781250364395). PreS–Gr. 1. Feb.

Cooper brings his signature style to this imaginative picture book about a cat whose flights of fancy take him to impressive, avian heights.

Vida: The Mice, the Cat, and the Alebrije. By Duncan Tonatiuh. Illus. by the author. 2025. 48p. Abrams (9781419764592). PreS–Gr. 3. Nov.

Mexican culture is the inspiration for this original folktale from the Sibert- and Belpré-winning author-illustrator, about two courageous mouse siblings who attempt to run off the cat terrorizing their town.

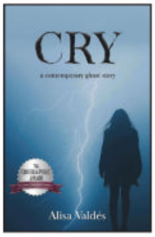
Lia inhabit as they are thrust into cold war shenanigans unashamedly driven by capitalism require an immense amount of explanation, but that explanation is provided naturally and will not overwhelm genre connoisseurs. Gong's eye for balancing serious social issues, high-stakes espionage, and moments of levity carries well from her successes writing historical fiction. Although Lia and Eirale are fascinatingly complex, side characters are not neglected in development. Overall, a fresh, disturbing take on dystopia from a more AI-informed world. —*Austin Ferraro*

Cry.

By Alisa Valdés.

Oct. 2025. 292p. illus. Arte Publico/Piñata, paper, $16.95 (9798893750263). Gr. 9–12.

Sixteen-year-old Grace Martínez cannot believe her luck when physicist Carl Sagan is the first person she sees after dying from a lightning strike. Unfortunately, her hero informs her that she will not remain deceased and "don't fight the work," forcefully returning her to her electrified body. Though disappointed not to receive more answers, Grace instead gains the horrifying ability to see and communicate with spiorads, spirits of those who have died but cannot move on. One even lives with her, another 16-year-old named Mohammad, whose death was deemed suicide (though Grace begins to suspect his death may have been something more sinister). Before her friends can help her solve this problem, she will have to convince them that she's not just hallucinating, while also navigating her father's closed-minded and controlling new wife and her own bookstore job, where she works for spirited, elderly Milagros. As Grace discovers who she can and cannot trust, not to mention that her guardian spirit is none other than the legendary La Llorona, she finds herself at the center of a dangerous investigation. Caustic and sharp-witted, Grace is an extremely compelling character with a strong, memorable voice. A little romance, a lot of mysteries, complex and nuanced characters, and a ghostly canine companion meld for an unputdownable ride with plenty of modern social commentary. —*Allie Stevens*



Fall of the Fireflies.

By Guadalupe García McCall.

Oct. 2025. 352p. Lee & Low/Tu, $23.95 (9781643796994). Gr. 8–12.

McCall's companion to *Summer of the Mariposas* (2012) follows 15-year-old twins Delia and Velia as they race against time to save their father and become divinely ordained warrior women in this trilogy starter. Delia is bright and energetic but quick to emotion. Velia, on the other hand, is introverted and methodical but anxiety-prone. Not only are they navigating their relationship with each other but also with their father, following his separation from their mother. They hope to mend their relationship while touring with his Tejano band, but after he's attacked by a supernatural entity, he's struck with a deadly case of susto, or soul separation. As they track his attacker, they become familiar with several other supernatural creatures and Aztec gods, taking the twins (and readers) on an emotional, fast-paced ride. The emphasis on familial ties and culture is impactful, and the incorporation of Mexican folklore, practices, and Aztec deities is a necessary addition in the world of YA fantasy. Recommended for fans of mythology and folklore and those in need of a quest. —*Bella Muniz*

A Fate So Cold.

By Amanda Foody and C. L. Herman.

Nov. 2025. 432p. Tor Teen, $22.99 (9781250873156). Gr. 9–12.

The sound of ice thawing is the catalyst for major change in Alderland. A legendary wand, called Valmordian, thaws from its icicle when Winter approaches, which means the Academy needs to find its wielder quickly. Ellery has been the star student at the Academy since she arrived a hero, having slain a winterghast when a storm destroyed her town. Domenic is last in his class and has all but given up on magic since the day the wand Syarthis unbonded in his classroom, killing classmates and forcing his best friend to bond with it in order to stop the carnage. Everyone expects Ellery to wield Valmordion, but the true surprise is when she creates Iskarius, the first Winter wand, and Dom is chosen by Valmordion. Ellery and Dom must fulfill the prophecy and stop the cataclysm, but what will fate force them to do? Although the story wanders for a while with red herrings, fans will still devour this work from two popular YA authors. A thrilling romantasy set in a world where the wand chooses the wizard, sure to engage fans of the popular subgenre. —*Stacey Shapiro*

A Fate Unwoven.

By Rachael A. Edwards.

Oct. 2025. 416p. Peachtree Teen, $19.99 (9781682637692). Gr. 9–12.

In her debut, Edwards weaves a complex tale of an empire coming to terms with its history and religion. Lena and Dimas could not be more diametrically opposed. Lena ekes out an existence in the Wilds, spreading the word of heretical gods and resisting the empire. Dimas is the heir to the empire's throne, but he is worried that his goddess, Næbya, has forsaken him, as he has not found his Fateweaver yet. When Lena discovers she is the next Fateweaver, she tries to resist. Discovering there is a way to sever her bond with the emperor, she enters the imperial city to find the ritual that will free her. Meanwhile, Dimas has his own agenda of crushing a cult of heretics that reappeared after his father's death. The addition of queer love interests elevates this work into a new take on the fantasy throne genre. Expansive world building and a cliff-hanger ending will leave readers impatiently awaiting the sequel. Perfect for libraries where fantasy flies off the shelves. —*Stacey Shapiro*

For No Mortal Creature.

By Keshe Chow.

Oct. 2025. 480p. Delacorte, $19.99 (9780593898475). Gr. 9–12.

In her sophomore novel, Chow weaves magic and longing together in a story strong in both its fantasy setting and its characterization. Jia Yi discovers she can travel to the spirit realm after she was stabbed through the heart and, miraculously, came back to life. She uses her newfound skills to travel to the afterlife to save her beloved grandmother, but that's also where she finds the ghost of Lin, her ex-best friend and former love, who deeply betrayed her. That complicated relationship is a highlight among the many scenes of heartbreak, confusion, and emotional complexity that drive Chow's atmospheric novel. As the political intrigue deepens in both the land of the living and the afterlife and Jia's ties to the spirit realm threaten to unravel everything she's built for herself, the pace picks up and readers will be racing to the end to find out what happens. Readers who love lush, myth-rich fantasies starring complex protagonists will appreciate this tale of transformation and sacrifice that explores the meaning of humanity in a world ruled by gods. —*Aurora Dominguez*

Girls Who Play Dead.

By Joelle Wellington.

Nov. 2025. 416p. Simon & Schuster, $21.99 (9781665974431). Gr. 9–12.

Mikky can't believe he is back in his hometown of Prophets Lake, attending the funeral of murdered Erin Vaughn, best friend of his sister, Kyla. He knows Kyla is devastated and wants to be there for her, so he moves back in with his dad and sister and enrolls in school. Kyla is intent on learning who spilled her and Erin's secrets, which may have contributed to her death. Mikky tentatively starts his senior year of high school, making friends, falling in love with a cute boy, and figuring out what Kyla knows about Erin's murder. The dual-POV story alternates between Mikky, who is coming to terms with his psychological foibles, and Kyla, a cheerleader who rules the school while driving a hearse and working in her dad's funeral home. This deliciously dark work is part mystery and part romance, with a unique sibling pair trying to come to terms with their psychological breaking points and the secrets that led to them. —*Rebecca Leonhard*

Hear Her Howl.

By Kim DeRose.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Union Square Kids, $19.99 (9781454960645). Gr. 8–11.

After she's caught kissing another girl, 16-year-old Rue is sent to an all-girls Catholic boarding school, Sacred Heart. Rue knows it's another of her mother's attempts to avoid admitting that Rue isn't the kind of daughter she wanted. Sacred Heart's gorgeous, forested campus feels like prison at first, but Rue is captivated by another student, Charlotte, an outcast who speaks out in class and sneaks into the woods. Following Charlotte one night, Rue learns that

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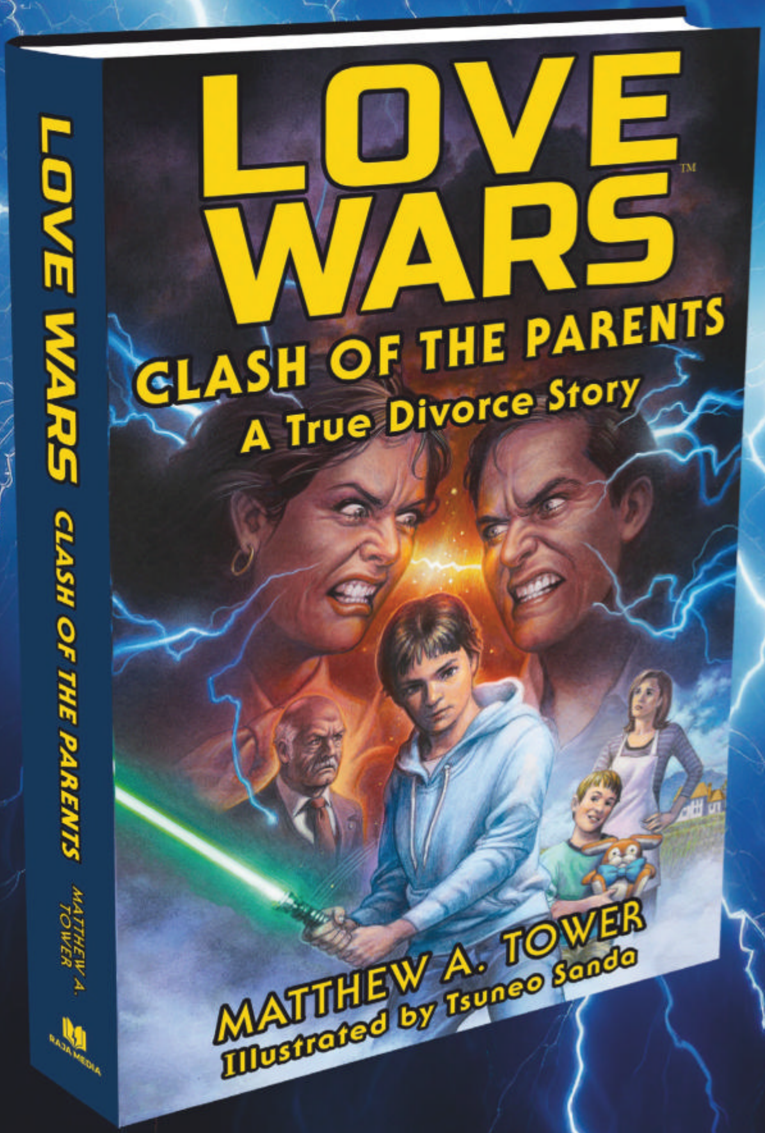
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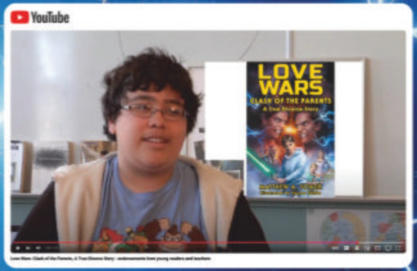
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Charlotte is a werewolf who can transform at will. She teaches Rue to unleash her own inner wolf, and as they're joined by more girls, their secret threatens Sacred Heart's status quo. DeRose cleverly, though overtly, uses werewolf lore as a metaphor for the ways "wild" girls are tamed into accepting society's unrealistic standards for women. Rue is relatable as she agonizes between being herself and conforming to expectations, a struggle mirrored in all of the girls. Though the ending is too neatly tied up, the book's triumphant feminist message is one to remember. —*Krista Hutley*

The House Saphir.
By Marissa Meyer.

Nov. 2025. 432p. Feiwel and Friends, $19.99 (9781250320957). Gr. 9–12.

The Fontaine Sisters are witches, but only minor talents—the best they can do is speak to ghosts. Younger sister Mallory has parlayed this into a side hustle, selling false spells and taking townspeople and tourists on tours of the original home of Bastien Saphir, who killed three of his wives. When Bastien's heir, Armand, seeks out Mallory to exorcise the ghost of Monsieur Le Bleu from his country estate, she can't resist, and she certainly can't turn down the large sum of money Armand is offering. Though she intends to defraud Armand and run away with his money, she changes her mind when she visits the haunted chateau and meets the vicious ghost. The stakes of her con change further when there's a murder and signs point to the handsome Armand as the killer. Can Mallory truly rid the home of the violent ghosts and monsters, and more importantly, can she trust Armand? This spirited retelling of the Bluebeard myth is full of slight scares and an undercurrent of humor (Saphir's first wife, Triphine, is hilarious as a ghost). —*Stacey Comfort*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Meyer has been a commercial success in every genre she's tried (especially fairy tale retellings), and this is no exception.

How We Play the Game.
By Alexis Nedd.

Nov. 2025. 400p. Bloomsbury YA, $19.99 (9781547605057). Gr. 9–12.

Ivan, once part of a famous esports team, is back at the Wizzard Games' Summer Academy Royale, hoping for a second chance after his original team crashed and burned last year. He's been through therapy and is trying to be a better person. Zora, who had to lie to her guardian to be allowed to attend, is looking for her only chance. Excelling at the Summer Academy could prove she has what it takes to go pro. Unfortunately, just being elite isn't enough for the academy—they're being scored on their social media personas and followings, and Zora's first-day flub has her feeling radioactive. When she and Ivan agree to fake-date to improve both their scores, autistic Zora struggles with her feelings for Ivan and reactions to her best friend Cass. This romance has the works: fake dating, enemies-to-lovers, rivalry, found family, and second chances. The story picks up in the world of Nedd's debut, so it should have a built-in audience, though new readers might find the lead-up a little slow. —*Stacey Comfort*

K-Jane.
By Lydia Kang.

Oct. 2025. 336p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, $19.99 (9780063354623). Gr. 8–11.

Kang offers a funny and heartfelt exploration of identity, cultural disconnect, and the sometimes messy path to self-discovery. Seventeen-year-old Jane Choi is a fashion-forward, high-achieving teen in suburban Nebraska who suddenly realizes she may be the least "K" person in her social circle. As her best friends obsess over K-pop and K-dramas, Jane—named after Jane Eyre by her second-generation Korean American parents—feels left out of a culture she barely knows. Determined to rewrite her narrative, Jane launches Project K-Jane, a private social media campaign, to reclaim her Korean roots. Help comes from surprising places: her charming classmate Edward Liu and Halmi, her loving, wise grandmother. But when the project spirals out of control and fractures friendships old and new, Jane must reckon with how little she's considered others' struggles—and how much pressure she's put on herself. While Jane's self-absorption and the teen drama skew a bit young for a 17-year-old protagonist, her earnest voice, clever dialogue (especially with her parents), and timely themes about cultural belonging and self-worth make this an accessible, relatable read. —*Alicia Rogers*

Last Chance Live!
By Helena Haywoode Henry.

Oct. 2025. 544p. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen, $21.99 (9780593625309). Gr. 9–12.

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LAST CHANCE LIVE!
HELENA HAYWOODE HENRY

Turn the channel to *Last Chance Live!*, where young death row inmates compete for America's vote in hopes of seeing their sentence—and their competitors—eliminated. Eternity Price doesn't know how long she has left to live, but she doesn't want it to be in prison. With an opportunity to get on the show, she jumps for it. Now, there are cameras in her face, alliances to be made and broken, and a brand to curate as a fat Black girl without knowing how the audience is responding. Contending with her guilt, Eternity will do anything to claw her way back to her little brother, even if he's all that's left on the outside. Through Eternity's perspective and using her legal background, Henry delivers a debut filled with deft nuance and searing societal commentary. Readers will find themselves questioning their own values as they get sucked into the drama and disturbing entertainment of the show, especially as references to real-life culture remind readers of Eternity's equally real counterparts. Henry ties up the harrowing story with four short essays addressing the themes of justice, mercy, wisdom, and renewal while encouraging and inspiring readers to change the world they live in. A stunning mix of social and political critique with humor, eye-gluing tension, and, ultimately, empathy, this surprising debut should be eagerly shared with fans of Neal Shusterman. —*Abby Hargreaves*

The Leaving Room.
By Amber McBride.

Oct. 2025. 224p. Feiwel and Friends, $19.99 (9781250908087). Gr. 7–12.

THE LEAVING ROOM
AMBER MCBRIDE

Gospel is a Keeper, living in a place called a Leaving Room and shepherding transitioning souls across the space between life and death. On bookshelves made from a living tree, she keeps jars filled with marble-sized memories—the very best memory of each person she meets. When she is alone, she plays mancala with a tree stump named Methuselah, who bears brutal scars from an unknown trauma. There is a lot about her role that she doesn't understand and many rules she must follow carefully. The longer she spends as a Keeper, the more aware Gospel becomes of the passing of time, and some of the souls she meets seem to begin holding more significance. When the boundaries between Gospel's Leaving Room and another begin to thin, she meets another Keeper named Melodee. As they begin to share their gifts with each other—Gospel's delicious desserts (several recipes included) and Melodee's moving violin music—the mysterious circumstances surrounding them also begin to unravel. Sparse yet evocative verse brings to life a deep and profound exploration of the liminal space between life and death, between here and wherever there is. Love and loss are given equal space in the narrative, and creative, thoughtful play with the structure of words on the page is engaging. Gorgeous and haunting, through and through. —*Allie Stevens*

The Library of Lost Girls.
By Kristen Pipps.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Delacorte, $19.99 (9780593900475). Gr. 8–12.

A traumatic incident four years ago left Gwen with a scar on her face, spurring their parents to send her wild-but-beloved older sister, Izzy, off to a finishing school known as the Delphi School for Girls. But the version of Izzy, who now goes by Isolde, that returns from Delphi is a very different and eerily hollow version of her former self. Extremely unsettled by her sister's sudden desire to marry and frustrated with Isolde refusing to answer any of her questions, Gwen realizes that she has only one way to find out what has happened to her sister—get herself sent off to Delphi. Once she arrives, secrets begin to spill out of the remote, frigid school packed to the brim with strange books, though the mechanism of its dark influence over its students and especially its alumni is dangerously guarded. Trust becomes hard to come by for Gwen, and alliances are found in unlikely places in this surprising and well-crafted tale with a sapphic romantic twist. A highly entertaining historical take on power, agency, and responsibility. *—Allie Stevens*

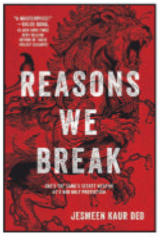
A Queen's Match.
By Katharine McGee.

Nov. 2025. 400p. Random, $20.99 (9780593710746). Gr. 9–12.

Picking up where its predecessor, *A Queen's Game*, left off, this fast-paced historical romance dishes up more royal intrigue as the three protagonists from the previous book face roadblocks to their hearts' desires. Hearts are broken, bonds are tested, secrets are revealed, and some characters find a measure of happiness amid (or despite) Queen Victoria's well-intentioned meddling. The voices of the three princesses (Alix of Hesse, Hélène d'Orléans, and May of Teck) are distinct as each one yearns for love with their perfect match—or someone else's. Rich details abound—such as the description of Queen Victoria's treasured brooch (containing her children's baby teeth) and accounts of sumptuous rooms, voyages aboard yachts, and the newly invented elevator—and together offer an appealing glimpse into the late nineteenth-century world in which these privileged women live, love, and sometimes lose their way. While the book's satisfying end will please readers, many will wonder what happens next. This curiosity might send readers scurrying for research about some of the real men and women behind these fictionalized versions. Read it with a box of tissues nearby. *—Barbara Ward*

★ Reasons We Break.
By Jesmeen Kaur Deo.

Nov. 2025. 416p. Disney/Hyperion, $18.99 (9781368113748). Gr. 9–12.



Deo follows her rom-com debut (*TJ Powar Has Something to Prove*, 2022) with a hard-hitting contemporary novel of romance and gang life set in the same Punjabi Sikh community of Kelowna, British Columbia. At 18, Rajan is a former Lion's Share gang member who spent time in juvie for murder. But Simran first met Rajan in ninth grade as his math peer tutor. Then, he resented her for being smart, responsible, and good. Now, Rajan is clean and out on probation, and Simran is in her first year at a local university, having given up her dream of attending a premier math program in Vancouver to please her parents. The spark of attraction between them grows after Simran's mother is diagnosed with an aggressive cancer. Rajan understands; he lost his own mother young. Inevitably, Rajan is forced back into the Lions. To get him out, Simran offers an exchange. She will decipher the stolen ledgers of their rivals, the Aces. Caught up in the challenge, Simran neglects her friends, family (including her cousin TJ), and studies—until her discoveries set off a gang war. Deo depicts murder attempts, torture, and drug abuse alongside the celebratory rituals and daily life of Kelowna's Sikh community to create an immersive read. Many will particularly enjoy the high stakes of Simran and Rajan's forbidden romance. *—Angela Carstensen*

The Resurrectionist.
By Kathleen S. Allen.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Roaring Brook, $19.99 (9781250341778). Gr. 9–12.

During the late Victorian period, 17-year-old twins Dilly and Deirdre Rothbart are left to worry about their futures following the unexpected death of their father. They soon meet the mysteriously handsome Ben Sinclair, who discovers Dilly's aspirations of becoming a surgeon (like her father) and introduces her to the world of grave robbing and operating on corpses. After a sibling argument and an unexpected incident brings about the demise of her twin, Dilly becomes feverish with the notion of reviving her beloved sister using her father's secret notes on resurrection. Time will tell if Dilly's decision to cheat death will lead to medical triumph or gruesome disaster. Allen's sf horror is a complementary read to (and inspired by) Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the moral dilemmas that arise when one attempts to play God. Some readers will feel squeamish in sections that involve medical procedures. However, the drama and plot twists in this page-turner will be too compelling for teens not to finish. *—Beronica Garcia*

A Riddle of Thorns.
By Sarena Nanua and Sasha Nanua.

Oct. 2025. 352p. Holiday, $19.99 (9780823460427). Gr. 9–12.

On her eighteenth birthday, Sana Gupta returns to her childhood home—the last place she saw her mother, Tara, alive. Seven years after Tara's disappearance, Razorthorn Manor is rumored to be haunted and its gardens long dead. Upon her arrival, Sana finds her nanny, Marta, along with Isabelle, Minho, and Fox, three strangers summoned at Tara's written behest to vie for the inheritance Sana assumed was solely hers. What's on the line? The manor and the seed of the fantastical razorthorn flower, known for its godly abilities. All they need to do is solve a series of riddles. And those strangers? Descendants of families once gifted the razorthorn by the goddess Flora herself. All have grand ideas for the flower's use, but there can only be one winner. The Nanua sisters have crafted a beguiling fantasy set in Edwardian Paris, dripping with dark intrigue. While multiple subplots slow the unraveling of the mystery, the writing holds steadfast. Alliances are formed, romance blooms, old wounds are uncovered, and scathing betrayals occur. Hand to readers in the mood for brooding, gothic vibes. *—Mahjabeen Syed*

The Sacred & the Divine.
By Kate Christensen and Melissa Henderson.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Disney/Melissa de la Cruz, $18.99 (9781368099431). Gr. 7–10.

In 1848 in Redcliffe, Massachusetts, Daisy Wolfson and her sisters, Morrigan and Avery, possess the ability to heal, as well as see into people's past, present, and future. They are sought out by ailing neighbors to provide relief and advice, and they use tarot cards to guide their actions. After a botched nighttime ritual, odd things begin happening and people start acting strange. Daisy is distracted from the serious situation by handsome newcomer Nate and her cousin Henry's annoying friend from Harvard, Jasper Fitzwilliam. When townspeople threaten their lives, both Daisy's mother and Daisy's former friend Kathryn make it known that they are aware of the girls' growing powers and reveal powers of their own. Plans are made to challenge the awakened demon, resulting in a magical confrontation with Daisy realizing her true affections and abilities. Christensen and Wolfe explore historical medical practices and herbal remedies along with class distinctions and the events that can supersede them. This is a compelling story for lovers of historical fiction, witches, and early medical history. *—Rebecca Leonhard*

★ There's Always Next Year.
By Leah Johnson and George M. Johnson.

Dec. 2025. 320p. Farrar, $19.99 (9780374391690). Gr. 9–12.

Two cousins' lives and loves twine together with fighting gentrification and racism on New Year's Day. Andy is an aspiring journalist who

loves her hometown of Oakrun, Indiana. Dominique, her older cousin, moved to New York City two years before to be an influencer and never came back. On New Year's Day, Andy winds up in a cross-city, snow-filled wild goose chase to hunt down her missing car. Meanwhile, Dominique tries to reconnect with his ex–best friend Tyler, while navigating the potential of signing onto a hotel development deal that would allow him to keep influencing—and change the face of Oakrun. Author superstars Leah Johnson and George M. Johnson brought both of their considerable talents to this cowritten young adult romance that's as sweet and cozy as it is meaningful and justice-minded. Andy shines as the female main character, an ambitious investigative journalist with a love story that is sure to elicit swoons. Dominique's journey coming home and facing what he's been running from is impactful and sweet. Side characters, especially Andy's older sister figure, Alotta Bang Bang, who brings both the laughs and the heart, enliven the small-town setting. Johnson and Johnson have penned a takedown of gentrification that doesn't skimp on the romance or the fun. *—Karis Rogerson*

A Time Traveler's History of Tomorrow.
By Kendall Kulper.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Holiday, $19.99 (9780823458295). Gr. 9–12.

When the cyclotron built by 18-year-old Genevieve Newhouse accidentally explodes at the second Chicago World's Fair in 1934 (blame it on the sexist scientists who wouldn't let a girl demonstrate her own device), she is saved from the catastrophic explosion by Ash, a young man also visiting the fair who has the convenient ability to travel back in time. Though he's usually only been able to rewind time by a few minutes, this time he and Genevieve fall back 41 years to the first Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Now the two must work together to try to get back to their own time—and to stop the impending apocalypse. In this third book featuring one of the intrepid Newhouse sisters, Kulper explores issues of class, race, and gender, especially in the sciences. Though the science of time travel is a little fuzzy, the story is full of action and heart, and at least a few unexpected twists. Give to readers who like a little mystery and adventure in their historical fiction, especially ones featuring a spunky lead. —*Heather Christensen*

★ We Fell Apart.

By E. Lockhart.

Nov. 2025. 320p. Delacorte, $22.99 (9780593899168). Gr. 9–12.

It is the summer after senior year and 18-year-old Matilda is flying from California to Martha's Vineyard at the invitation of the father she has never known. Kingsley Cello is a famous artist who once painted Matilda's absentee mother, Isadora, and that is all she knows about him. Still, she is curious and eager to get to know him. However, when she arrives at Kingsley's castle at Hidden Beach, she finds three boys around her age, one of whom is her half brother, Meer, along with Meer's mother, June. The castle is barely held together, and Kingsley is away with no firm return date. As the days go by with no word from Kingsley, Matilda becomes closer to the boys, especially (and surprisingly) Tatum, who was originally apprehensive of Matilda's arrival, but she soon learns that her visit is predicated on an unsustainable web of lies that eventually collapses. Matilda shines as the central character, bringing out the best in most of the other characters and breaking the cycle of lies by telling the truth, an action that allows everyone to breathe and move on. Lockhart's third novel in the We Were Liars universe is lucidly written and builds on the story of the Sinclair family in a subtle and realistic way. —*Donna Scanlon*

e. lockhart
we fell apart
we were liars

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Lockhart's return to Martha's Vineyard is steeped with mystery, intrigue, and familial tension, and her new fans, following the recently released TV adaptation of *We Were Liars*, will revel in this new chapter.

We're Not Safe Here.

By Rin Chupeco.

Nov. 2025. 352p. Sourcebooks/Fire, paper, $12.99 (9781728255941). Gr. 9–12.

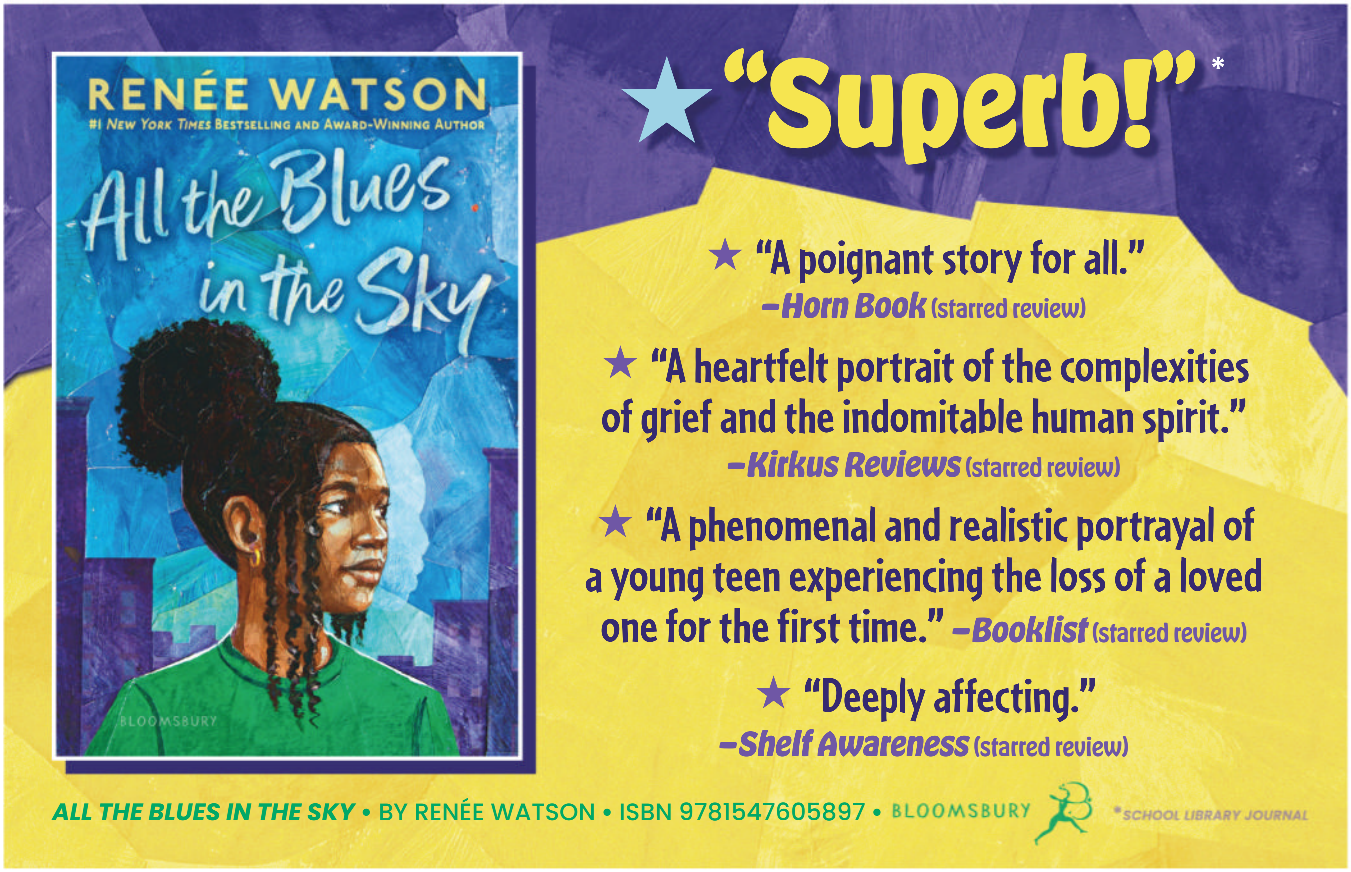
There's something in the woods surrounding Wispy Falls, a town with a tragic legacy of disappearances. One online creator calling himself the Storymancer posts videos online exploring Wispy Falls' nooks and crannies, but it's not just for entertainment: years ago, the Storymancer's cancer-stricken brother went missing, and he is determined to find answers after learning that every other missing person had also been battling disease. After digging, it becomes evident that monsters in the woods are only a small piece of a deeper, eldritch mystery at the very heart of the town. What price is he willing to pay to get to that truth? Chupeco specializes in writing surreal, unsettling, and utterly fearless stories, and this is no exception. This time, she leans into the vibes of creepypastas and online horror series like The Backrooms by stitching together video transcripts, message board excerpts, and email exchanges into a unique and genuinely disturbing reading experience. Not for the fainthearted, as this book features a fair amount of graphic imagery, it will nevertheless thrill readers immersed in the world of digital horror. —*Reinhardt Suarez*

The Writing Room.

By Marcia Argueta Mickelson.

Nov. 2025. 256p. Carolrhoda/Lab, $19.99 (9798765627716). Gr. 9–12.

Maya's comfortable life comes to an abrupt halt after high-school graduation, when her wealthy father insists that it's time for her to



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#1 New York Times Bestselling and Award-Winning Author
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★ "Superb!"*

★ "A poignant story for all."
—Horn Book (starred review)

★ "A heartfelt portrait of the complexities of grief and the indomitable human spirit."
—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

★ "A phenomenal and realistic portrayal of a young teen experiencing the loss of a loved one for the first time." —Booklist (starred review)

★ "Deeply affecting."
—Shelf Awareness (starred review)

ALL THE BLUES IN THE SKY • BY RENÉE WATSON • ISBN 9781547605897 • BLOOMSBURY

*SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

start supporting herself. While he'll still pay for college—*if* she follows his vision for her future—she's otherwise on her own. Maya finds temporary housing in a cramped NYC apartment with friends from her library job and writes for her sister's magazine. When she finds out that her father has been secretly (and illegally) funding a conservative politician who speaks ill of all immigrants, Maya, as the daughter of an immigrant mother herself, must decide whether to break with her father and speak out for what she believes in. Mickelson offers an interesting portrayal of a pampered, rich upbringing coming to an abrupt end and the realistic decisions and challenges that ensue, from finding housing and food to learning how to wash one's own dishes for the first time. With a unique take on the current political climate, this novel explores finding one's footing in the adult world and standing behind one's beliefs. *—Joel Shoemaker*

Middle Readers

Bad Cheerleader.

By Alex Thayer.

Nov. 2025. 288p. Aladdin, $18.99 (9781665955270). Gr. 5–8.

Margaret, aka "Bag," is a dyslexic seventh grader with a lot on her plate. School is a struggle, as is her family life, what with her older sister's capricious moods, her mom's obliviousness, and her dad's absence. When Bag notices her sister, Minerva, becoming secretive, she becomes determined to figure out what Minerva's hiding, turning from bookworm to cheerleader in order to do so. "Random Thoughts" of Bag's are provided as asides throughout, each with a subject and a corresponding Dewey decimal number. Thayer's narrative touches on heavy issues, including divorce, substance abuse, and even forgery, balancing these realities with entertaining details and generally casting the adults in a comic light. By the end, Bag learns that despite the hardships life throws our way, "Everyone has something good about them," an always valuable reminder for young readers. With her sophomore novel, Thayer (*Happy & Sad & Everything True*, 2024) is cementing her place as a household name in the middle-grade fiction space. *—Kristina Roderick*

The Beasts Beneath the Winds: Tales of Southeast Asia's Mythical Creatures.

Ed. by Hanna Alkaf. Illus. by Jes Wibowo and Cin Wibowo.

Oct. 2025. 352p. Abrams/Amulet, $18.99 (9781419770098). Gr. 3–6.

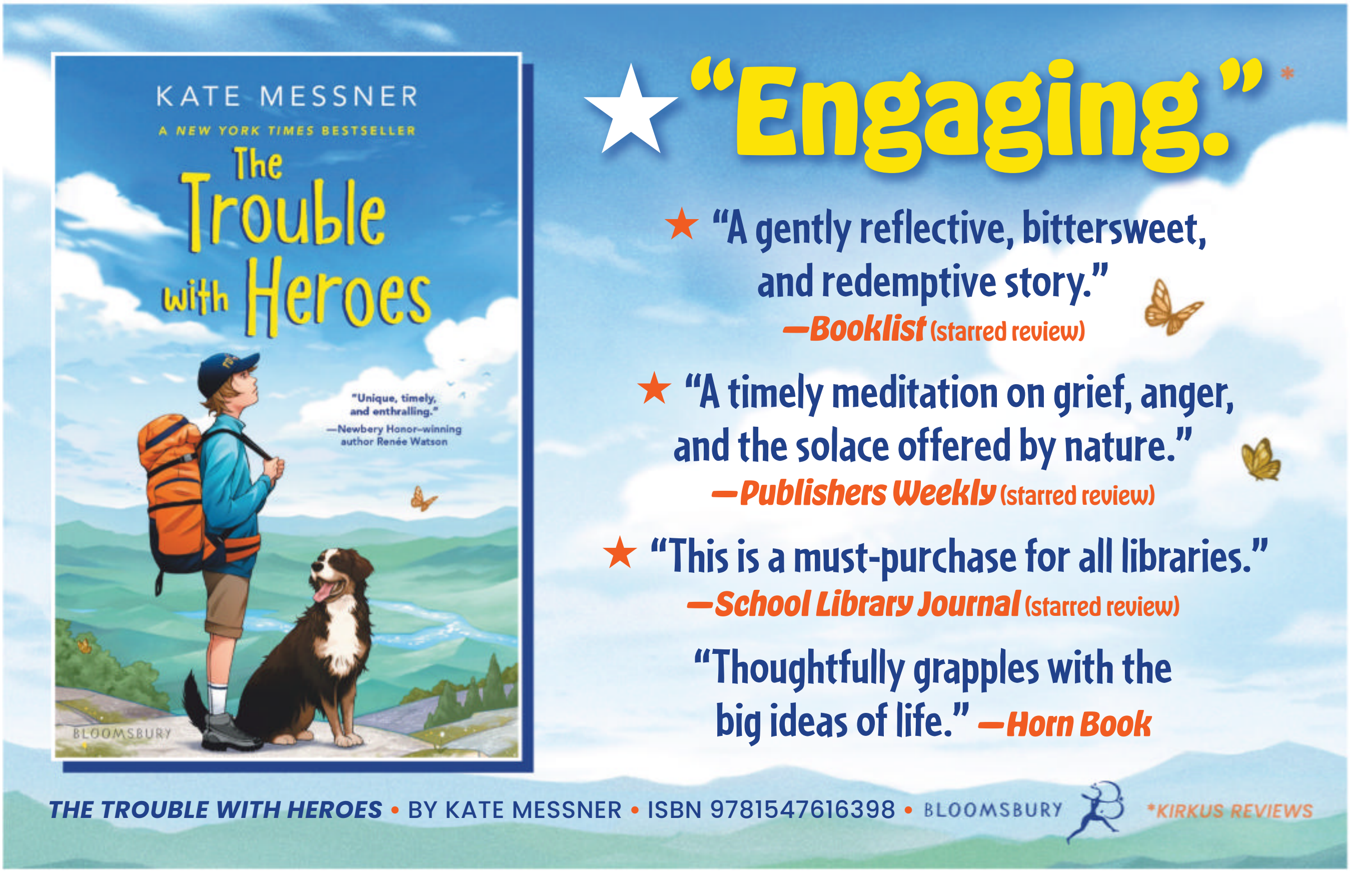
Meet 17 legendary beasts and mythical creatures from Southeast Asian folklore in this lively and imaginative anthology edited by Alkaf (*The Girl and the Ghost,* 2020). Featuring stories by acclaimed authors—including two-time Newbery Medalist Erin Entrada Kelly and National Book Award finalist Shing Yin Khor—this collection brings to life legends long underrepresented in mainstream literature. Each story is paired with a field guide–style spread containing charming illustrations and notes detailing a creature's origin, behavior, and defining characteristics, along with helpful warnings for the unsuspecting traveler. These tales weave together unforgettable encounters between young protagonists and the magical beings rooted in their cultural heritage, from a mischievous, song-loving kapre in the Philippines to a parasitic pelesit disturbing a Malaysian kampung. This heartfelt, atmospheric collection that celebrates Southeast Asian voices and traditions explores themes of courage, identity, and belonging and is perfect for readers who love mythology, monsters, and discovering new stories from around the world. *—Ziana Deen*

Dragonborn.

By Struan Murray.

Oct. 2025. 336p. Dutton, $19.99 (9798217113217). Gr. 3–6.

Alex's world is turned upside down when she finds herself exhibiting strange behaviors that draw the attention of a quirky old man named Oliphos. He reveals that she is a Slumberer, a person who is unknowingly a dragon, but Alex's inner dragon is waking up and causing her to unintentionally transform. Oliphos, a dragon himself, takes Alex to the island of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"Unique, timely, and enthralling." —Newbery Honor–winning author Renée Watson
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★ "Engaging." *

★ "A gently reflective, bittersweet, and redemptive story." —Booklist (starred review)

★ "A timely meditation on grief, anger, and the solace offered by nature." —Publishers Weekly (starred review)

★ "This is a must-purchase for all libraries." —School Library Journal (starred review)

"Thoughtfully grapples with the big ideas of life." —Horn Book

THE TROUBLE WITH HEROES • BY KATE MESSNER • ISBN 9781547616398 • BLOOMSBURY

*KIRKUS REVIEWS

Skralla, where other youths are learning to control and free their dragon sides. She joins the larger cause to heal the rift between dragons and humankind in order to prevent a terrible war. Murray skillfully handles Alex's struggles to become her true self and discover who can be trusted on her journey to dragon formation. The plot is moved along cleverly by the use of a book-within-a-book device, revealing just enough at each juncture to create suspense and keep readers' interest. The secondary characters are individualized and supportive and the antagonist is wonderfully evil. Following a delicious twist at the end, readers will be hooked until book two arrives. —*Beth Rosania*

The Firefly Crown.

By Yxavel Magno Diño.

Nov. 2025. 288p. Bloomsbury, $18.99 (9781547615162). Gr. 4–7.

Cricket-whisperer Mayumi can barely summon the fealty of a lowly cricket—the namesake of her mambabarang power—so when the great and terrible evil known as the Ghost Swarm attacks the Imperial ship that she and her parents are traveling on, no one expects her to save anything. But after her wits and skill in metalworking allow her to drive back the all-consuming swarm, she wins the attention of the Imperial court. Mayumi's epic deed goes uncelebrated, however, as the Imperial city is preparing for the crowning of a new empress. Mambabarang from across the realm have gathered to witness the ceremony, but while they await the ceremony, the Swarm rips through the streets, devouring the meek and powerful alike. Mayumi takes action once again, finding to her horror that the Swarm's controller is much closer to the crown than anyone expected. Reminiscent of the darker-themed Miyazaki films, this is an exciting, if familiar, underdog narrative that will appeal to fans of manga like *Fullmetal Alchemist* and also welcome newcomers to the fantasy genre. —*Jess Chrysler*

Firefox Moon.

By Eoin Colfer.

Nov. 2025. 368p. Roaring Brook, $19.99 (9781250372642). Gr. 3–6.

Juniper Lane and her reindeer, Skära, act as the Guardians of Cedar Wood, an area in England where Santa Claus once kept a low profile. When Santa left the area, he left behind more magic than he realized. Magic attracts magic, but not always the good kind, and this complicates life for Juniper. Not only is she supposed to keep her magic secret, but she must also protect her home from villainous witches and queens, as well as face obstacles in the form of wolves and a gigantic sloth. Despite being a follow-up to *Juniper's Christmas* (2024), this story can be enjoyed at any time of year, and new readers will not be confused if *Firefox Moon* is their entry into the Juniper Lane Adventures series. True fantasy lovers will understand specific references and easily keep up with characters' multiple names and titles. Colfer doesn't disappoint with this unique and whimsical adventure that brings together a wonderfully strange collection of characters. —*Diana Ford*

Grimmelings.

By Rachael King.

Oct. 2025. 288p. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry, $18.99 (9781665984225). Gr. 3–6.

Ella comes from a long line of strong women, from her witchy Scottish grandma to a mother who has succeeded in establishing a top sightseeing stable in New Zealand. Ella loves her equine-oriented existence, but there's sadness, too: her father went missing, and the town regards the family as a curious coven. Ella worries that the town's fears might have merit when she curses a local boy who promptly disappears, and the appearance of an unsettling wild stallion does nothing to allay her fears. Family secrets float to the surface, old loves come to light, and Ella will have to use all of her wiles to subdue a cunning kelpie and save her family and town. King deftly weaves Scottish folklore and vocabulary into a deliciously creepy and supremely satisfying story. The eerie atmosphere and unsettling interactions are wonderfully countered by fiercely loving familial (and animal) relationships, and the beguiling book will particularly appeal to horse or horror fans. A creative, compelling reminder of the power that words and stories can contain. —*Emily Graham*

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How to Save a Library.

By Colleen Nelson. Illus. by the author.

Nov. 2025. 224p. Pajama, $19.95 (9781772783520). Gr. 3–6.

Casey has been on the move his entire life. At 12 years old, he and his single father find themselves in Armstrong's Point, a close-knit town that Casey hopes will finally be home. That dream is threatened when the local library, where his dad works, faces closure if it can't make expensive building repairs. No library would mean no job for his dad, and that would surely mean another move. Determined to help, Casey joins the Kids C.A.N. club, hoping that they can win the money the library needs in a community-project competition. Casey finds a way to involve his soccer team in the fundraising efforts, repair a damaged friendship, and help a beloved family of ducks during his library crusade. The story's focus on saving a library is timely, and the way the whole town comes together to do so is refreshing. Nelson's wholesome novel features short chapters that move quickly, making it a feel-good option for reluctant readers, library lovers, and kids who need a primer on the value of true friendship. —*Joel Shoemaker*

I Survived the Dust Bowl, 1935.

By Lauren Tarshis. Illus. by Scott Dawson.

Oct. 2025. 144p. Scholastic, paper, $6.99 (9781338891829). Gr. 3–7.

Eleven-year-old Ray is stuck outside and far from shelter when the historic Black Sunday dust storm hits the Texas panhandle on April 14, 1935. The dust storms over the past four years have gotten so bad that kids must wear smelly gas masks when storms occur. Worse, Ray is upset that Dolly, his best friend, is moving because her little brother Skippy almost died from dust pneumonia. The crops have died, and farmers like Ray's family are struggling financially. When Ray realizes how in debt his parents are, he impulsively decides to jump a railroad car for California to find work so he can send money home, unaware of the impending dust storm. In this action-packed adventure based on real events, Tarshis vividly portrays the experience of a dust storm—the screaming wind and blinding, choking, swirling dirt that scours and tears your skin. Tarshis' inclusion of Dust Bowl history and a description of life in the 1930s provides helpful context for readers. This exciting and fast-paced title in the I Survived series includes a concluding bibliography. —*Sharon Rawlins*

Kimmy Carson Is Not Scared.

By C. H. Williams.

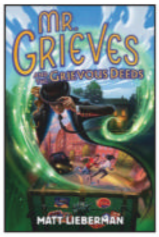
Dec. 2025. 160p. Enslow/West 44, $25.80 (9781978597952). Gr. 4–7.

A tween's burgeoning exploration of disobedience is complicated by her heart condition, one that has kept her docile and bored for many years. When Kimmy Carson's class starts working on a horror maze for the Halloween carnival, Kimmy gets upset because she knows she can never participate in anything scary, as it will stress her heart. As the carnival nears, Kimmy begins to experiment with ways she can step outside of her heart condition's restrictions, but a bad fall at the skate park triggers a difficult realization among her family. This short novel in verse flies through Kimmy's journey. The world isn't fully realized, but Kimmy's voice is strong and her emotions palpable on the page. Though the plot offers a Halloween tie-in, it will also resonate with readers throughout the year. Ideal for reluctant readers, this slim volume is also a good pick for fans of Lisa Fipps and K. A. Holt who want a quick novel in verse and a relatable but dramatic story. —*Aryssa Damron*

Mr. Grieves and the Grievous Deeds.

By Matt Lieberman.

2025. 240p. Harper, $18.99 (9780063273429). Gr. 4–7.



Shamelessly courting librarians and young readers alike while poking fun at parenting manuals and iconic nannies like Jeeves and Mary Poppins, Lieberman casts 12-year-old Victoria—a poster child for prim overachievers—into a whirl of thrilling, liberating misdeeds following the sudden arrival of bowler-topped "childcare specialist" Centimeter Grieves and his lock-picking monkey, Kevin. "The nanny industry has come a long way from a spoonful of sugar," says Mr. Grieves, dosing a deceptively supportive school principal with truth serum. "Just let the medicine go down." With a certain long-hidden picture book in play that, used along with two other "Totems," has the terrifying power to make all young people behave well, Victoria and her irritatingly normal little brother, Ozzy, find themselves caught in a contest for their loyalty between the cryptic, outrageously permissive Grieves and a mysterious governess whose prescriptive Supporting Education and Resources for Vitality in Children's Empowerment organization (aka The Service) includes a certain shadowy figure with a straw hat, umbrella, and ninja skills. Though dueling philosophies of child-rearing lead to some preachy passages, by the end, Victoria has made choices that sapient children will cheer and that also give her an opportunity to transform a classmate from a bully into a boyfriend with "dimples and a cute-butt chin." —*John Peters*

The Notted Island.

By Katherine Child. Illus. by the author.

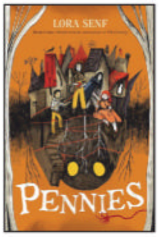
Oct. 2025. 144p. Flying Eye, $19.99 (9781838749507). Gr. 4–7.

Child's delightfully quirky fable celebrates imagination, determination, and the magic of doing things the hard—and heartfelt—way. Set in 1861 on the colorless Last Island, the story follows spirited Umbertiska "Tisky" Lupp, a young girl with a knack for stirring up the right kind of trouble. Lately, the island's Notte, who's supposed to draw and unspool the fabric of the night sky each day, has been getting it all wrong. When an Automated Night Sky salesman arrives, promising efficiency, Tisky swipes his papers and sets off to save the sky. Her journey winds through forests of whispering listenberry bushes, where she meets grumpy sprites and even a sundial's sentient shadow. The island's color—and its fate—hang in the balance. Child's prose is vivid and lyrical, perfectly matched by pencil illustrations that grow in detail and ambition as the story unfolds. Together, they build a world that feels both ancient and brand new. Playful, poetic, and just a little bit wild, this pint-sized epic trusts readers to embrace mystery and fight for magic. —*Alicia Rogers*

Pennies.

By Lora Senf. Illus. by Alfredo Cáceres.

2025. 384p. Atheneum, $18.99 (9781665967242). Gr. 4–7.



The people of Blight Harbor are no strangers to strange happenings. As residents of the seventh-most haunted town in America, they're used to the sight of ghosts and having vampires for neighbors. They're even fine with the occasional appearance of portals to a perilous underworld—where a dark sun hangs in a bruise-colored sky—so long as those doors are quickly sealed shut by the ever-vigilant townspeople. But a recent string of disappearances has everyone on edge, and when friends Mae, Lark, Brigid, and Claret stumble upon a door that none of the adults seem to see, they can't shake the feeling it's somehow connected. Then Brigid's cousin, Emilia, goes missing, and the group suspects that Johnny Pope, the local miscreant, may have used the door to hide her away in the Dark Sun Side. The girls venture through the door, hoping to find their friend before something terrible happens, and they quickly discover that the worst kind of monsters often wear a human face. Senf returns to the world of *The Clackity* (2022) in this imaginative prequel set 100 years prior, telling a story that beautifully balances fantastical and frightening elements with a wonderfully nuanced and heartfelt portrayal of friendship. Alive with atmosphere and character, this creepy, captivating read will appeal to both longtime fans of the established series and newcomers alike. —*Ricardo Reading*

The Rise of Neptune.

By Scott Reintgen.

Oct. 2025. 432p. Aladdin, $18.99 (9781665946544). Gr. 4–7.

"Neptune is coming." Lunar Jones may have befriended a dragon, led a group of young soldiers to victory, and revived the entire Martian ecosystem, but he finds it difficult to enjoy his success, haunted by the dying words of a captured enemy. Still, Lunar, his beloved dragon Dread, and his loyal Dread Knights have been busy managing the newly thriving planet, and it's not until they receive a fresh batch of settlers that things begin to go haywire. Neptunian forces do, in fact, arrive en masse, bringing new dragons, seemingly untouchable troops, and murky but malevolent intentions to contend with. Lunar will have to call on old friends, new allies, and his own compassionate heart to keep the galaxy from falling into ruin. The stellar sequel feels pleasantly familiar while fleshing out established characters and expanding the existing mythology, but the stakes are higher and relationships deeper. The excellent action scenes and suspense will keep readers absorbed, while moments of humor and friendship (and burgeoning crushes) lighten the load. A worthy return to a wonderfully fantastical world. *—Emily Graham*

Secrets of the Broken House.

By Taryn Souders.

Jan. 2026. 272p. Sourcebooks, $16.99 (9781464244971). Gr. 4–7.

A decrepit old house, a curmudgeonly old lady, and a small town without much happening offer a delightful chance for readers to go inside the head of Tucker, the Sherlock of his friend group. Hired to do some cleaning for mean old Miss Geraldine, Tucker, Clemmie, and Sadie make a grim discovery when they report for duty: Miss Geraldine's dead body at the bottom of a staircase. Though they call in the police, which includes Tucker's dad, the kids decide to put their heads together to solve the mystery themselves, because something tells Tucker that this was no accident. Souders' latest is a humorous, well-paced story in which the setting and characters shine. Tucker and his friends are likable, endearingly flawed, and funny, while the close-knit town is a hotbed of gossip and memorable residents. While this is a murder mystery, the narrative doesn't linger on the crime's gruesome details, making it a good choice for elementary-aged readers drawn to whodunits, as well as middle-graders, who will enjoy Tucker's insights and observations. *—Aryssa Damron*

Secrets of the Snakestone.

By Piu DasGupta.

Oct. 2025. 288p. Nosy Crow, $17.99 (9798887771939). Gr. 4–8.

Zélie Dutta of Calcutta has been sent to live with and work for the recently widowed Madame Malaise in Paris as payment for her father's debt to the Malaise family. Zélie's housemaid life is not easy, as she becomes the scapegoat for other staff members' mistakes. Complications arise when written communication from her father suddenly stops and his special locket—thought to have once held the mysteriously powerful Snakestone—is found in the sewers by Jules Dubois, a young street cleaner. Zélie and Jules form an unlikely friendship, working together to determine what happened to Zélie's father while dodging murderers, secret society members, and a bit of magic that just may be emanating from the pendant. The duo enlist the help of a fortune teller, learning the true power of the Snakestone, and hasten their quest to find it and discover the true fate of Zélie's father. In this middle grade debut, readers are introduced to the dark, gritty, and magical underworld of nineteenth-century Europe with a page-turning mystery that remains suspenseful to the very end. *—Aryn Prestia*

Sparrow, Always.

By Gail Donovan. Illus. by Elysia Case.

Nov. 2025. 160p. Atheneum, $16.99 (9781665963299). Gr. 3–6.

Sparrow, a fourth-grader known to her friends, classmates, and acquaintances as a cat lover, meets Miss Eileen, a young woman walking Toby, a yellow Lab and future guide dog, assuming that his "puppy raiser" successfully prepares him for a challenging test. Passing it will qualify him for the next, more-advanced stage of training. Soon Miss Eileen and Toby move into "the other half" of the house where Sparrow and her parents live. Meanwhile, school becomes increasingly difficult after Sparrow's teacher rearranges the students' desks, separating Sparrow from her best friend. And, sent to the library to find books on clouds, Sparrow returns with a stack of books on dogs. Fans of the Sparrow Being Sparrow series will enjoy this, the third volume, which also works as a stand-alone book. Sparrow is a sensitive girl who is often guided by her emotions but is also capable of analyzing situations and being fair-minded. The involving storyline and the occasional black-and-white line drawings in this volume will appeal to readers who are moving up to chapter books. *—Carolyn Phelan*

Three Blue Hearts.

By Lynne Kelly.

Oct. 2025. 288p. Delacorte, $17.99 (9780593898390). Gr. 3–6.

For Max, it's not easy being the son of a larger-than-life politician, forever in the public spotlight and never living up to his dad's expectations. So, when he gets to travel with his mom for the summer to coastal Texas, Max is happy to fade from the spotlight for a few months. Soon after arriving, he finds an injured octopus and works with locals to save her. This endeavor helps grow Max's confidence, convictions, and interpersonal abilities. In her newest tale, Kelly (*Song for a Whale,* 2019) does what she does best—getting to the hearts of kids who are aching to be themselves and submerging them in challenging situations that help them shine. Boasting a combination of family dynamics, new friendships, animal husbandry, challenging choices, and coming of age, this will resonate with readers who enjoy diving into realistic fiction with a side of animal love. A solid purchase that Kelly's fans will gobble up and librarians will find easy to booktalk. Sensitive readers may appreciate knowing that animal death occurs in this story. *—Beth Rosania*

Time Lions and the Chrono-Loop.

By Krystal Sutherland and Martin Seneviratne.

Oct. 2025. 272p. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen, $18.99 (9780593616321). Gr. 5–8.

Twins Patrick and Pearl's secret passions involve creative inventions, new discoveries, and historical exploration. With the help of Pearl's creation, the Chrono-loop, the twins travel back in time and accidentally change the course of history with one tiny misstep. In an effort to undo the damage, they meet the leaders of TIME (The Interdimensional Misconduct Enquiry), who ensure time travelers don't disrupt history. TIME is at odds with a new start-up company whose leader hopes to change all negative aspects of history in order to create a future utopia. Patrick and Pearl must decide which team to join. Do they think history should remain the same, or should they improve the world wherever (and whenever) they can? The fast-paced story includes healthy doses of Sri Lankan heritage, world history, and science in a way that keeps readers engaged while learning. With the door left open for a sequel, this genre-bending sf adventure will be the next series to recommend to lovers of the Rick Riordan Presents imprint. *—Diana Ford*

The Valley of Lies.

By Ali Standish.

Nov. 2025. 304p. Harper, $19.99 (9780063275676). Gr. 4–7.

Welcome back to Baskerville Hall, where the young Arthur Conan Doyle has developed strong friendships with a select group of his classmates and earned the respect of his professors, including the one whose opinion he values most: Sherlock Holmes. In this episodic story, a stranger has enlisted Arthur's help in finding one or more magical objects. Failure will result in the death of his youngest sister. In book 3 of the Improbable Tales of Baskerville Hall series, Standish does so many things right, including filling in readers new to the series on what they need to know while the keeping explanations brief for the sake of loyal fans. More broadly, Standish patiently builds the basic story while incorporating elements of Arthur's previous adventures and introducing many interesting characters seen earlier in the series. Gradually, she brings the story's suspenseful tone to a dramatic climax. Whether the reader is familiar with the "actual" Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes or not, this very readable novel will appeal to many fans of mystery and historical fiction books. *—Carolyn Phelan*

Young

Broken.

By X. Fang. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Tundra, $18.99 (9781774882009). PreS–Gr. 2.

When Mei Mei breaks Ama's cup, her guilt escalates to comic heights in the latest from critically acclaimed Fang (*We Are Definitely Human*, 2024). Mei Mei's being a little reckless when she knocks Ama's mug off the table, so she flees the scene and promptly begins to imagine all the terrible things that are going to happen—will Ama kick her out?! But when her grandmother finally tracks her down, it's only to offer her a piece of cake. When Ama blames the cat, Mimi—and Mimi stares Mei Mei down with a deeply judgmental gaze—

Mei Mei can't take the guilt and the truth spills out. In illustrations rendered with fine-lined shading, off-kilter angles, and pleasantly chunky figure design, Fang wryly taps into a childlike sense of anxiety and fear of consequences, as well as the relief of forgiveness and unconditional love. Mei Mei's emotional roller coaster is comically but unmistakably telegraphed in Fang's depictions of faces and gestures, and kids who need a reminder that accidents happen will be especially heartened by the warm resolution. *—Sarah Hunter*

Call Me Gray.

By Andrew Larsen and Bells Larsen. Illus. by Tallulah Fontaine.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Kids Can, $21.99 (9781525311352). K–Gr. 3.

"Every winter I build an ice rink with my dad. It's a tradition." This year things feel different. As they construct the rink, night after night, the child slowly opens up. "'Do you ever feel mixed up about who you are?' I ask. . . . 'Do you ever feel different than the way you look?'" Dad misunderstands the child's approach to this important conversation around identity, but the kid bravely shifts tacks and continues trying. "'I look like a boy but sometimes I feel more like a girl.' There. I said it." Dad reacts supportively, fumbling after the child asks "to change my name to Gray," but Gray firmly corrects him. The new name "feels warm. It feels right"—just like their post-skate cocoa. Concise text on seasonally white expanses of gouache illustrations sustains a spare, child-centered focus, and Gray's vulnerability is met with wonderful support and realistic imperfection. A truly welcome addition to coming out stories with positive modeling of open conversations and parental acceptance. *—Kit Ballenger*

Don't Eat Eustace.

By Lian Cho. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Harper, $19.99 (9780063321847). PreS–Gr. 2.

LIAN CHO
DON'T EAT
EUSTACE

When cuddly lighthouse keeper Bear reels in a bright, discarded sail, they inadvertently rescue a fish—very convenient for Bear, who's trying to catch lunch, but not so convenient for the fish, Eustace, who would love to not be eaten. With wry humor and a wicked sense of dramatic irony, Cho (*Oh, Olive!*, 2023) depicts Bear preparing to make fish stew while promising not to eat Eustace, and the fish, clearly not swayed by Bear's words, finds convenient interruptions to delay the plan. First is a heron with a broken wing; the colorful sail could do the trick! Then Bear's looking a little chilly; perhaps there's enough sail for a sweater and hat? Then a shark, hoping to brighten up his wardrobe to be less scary, requests a jaunty jacket. Over the course of the sewing projects, Bear warms to Eustace, and they ultimately share a supper of tomato soup. In her vibrant, playful gouache and colored-pencil illustrations, Cho comically captures emotion in Bear's and Eustace's cartoonish faces, from Bear's eye-rolling agreement to not eat Eustace ("I would *never*") to Eustace's suspicious squint. Nautical design elements, like rope borders around some vignettes, add to the seaside atmosphere, and a final reveal gleefully subverts the harmonious ending with a hilarious page turn. Pair with Neil Sharpson and Dan Santat's *Don't Trust Fish* (2025) for a rollicking double-feature read-aloud. *—Sarah Hunter*

Family of Friends.

By Varsha Bajaj. Illus. by Ishaa Lobo.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen, $18.99 (9780593625156). PreS–Gr. 3.

Isha is excited to tell her elderly neighbor that her nani (grandmother) in India will soon be flying in to celebrate Isha's birthday. She's been telling her favorite neighbors and friends about Nani, who has weekly conversations with Isha via video call. When Nani becomes ill and must postpone her trip, Isha is disappointed that her grandmother will miss her birthday party. Recognizing her sadness, Isha's neighbors offer comfort, and as she delivers party invitations to her neighbors and friends, she begins to value her feeling of kinship with them all. On her birthday, Nani pays Isha a virtual visit and meets her special friends, young and old, who now feel like family. While the basic story may sound somewhat idealized, Isha's first-person narrative clearly expresses her sorrow as well as her happiness in sharing her thoughts and feelings with friends of different ages. Reflecting the story's tone, the illustrations feature simplified forms, rich colors, and an irrepressible sense of joy. A heartfelt, encouraging story that will resonate with kids whose relatives live far away. *—Carolyn Phelan*

A Friend for Fox.

By Enrico Lorenzi. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane, $19.99 (9781665964272). PreS–Gr. 2.

When Fox's friends Wolf and Hedgehog end their evening early to go to bed, Fox is lonely and wishes for a friend to continue drinking cocoa with. On a walk, Fox discovers several other animals in need of assistance. After he helps them, though, they are exhausted and want to sleep. Amusingly, these animals all don nightcaps before disappearing to bed. The illustrations show Fox's frustration growing through swelling swirls of angry black lines above his head. Fortunately for Fox, a host of nocturnal creatures (Bat, Owl, Frog, Raccoon) finally turn up and join him for cocoa. At daybreak, Fox is tucked into bed. But soon, poor Fox is awakened when his daytime friends return, wide awake and ready for cocoa. The cartoonish illustrations offer colorful, layered depictions of the anthropomorphic animals and their forest setting. In a book based on a scientific concept, it is a bit jarring to cast all animals, including those typically in predator-prey relationships, as friends. Still, this is a sweet and funny take on nocturnal versus diurnal animals. *—Miriam Aronin*

Home for Margaret.

By Denise Davy. Illus. by Bérengère Delaporte.

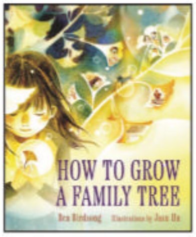
Oct. 2025. 32p. Groundwood, $19.99 (9781773067766). PreS–Gr. 2.

On a wintry forest hike with her mom, Emma spies a blue camping tent covered in snow. As they near, a gray-haired woman in a bulky yellow coat climbs out. The courteous, curious little girl notices that the woman looks tired and that her nose and cheeks are bright red. Emma introduces herself and asks, "Why are you out here?" Margaret answers, "I live here." Later, Emma's mom, a social worker, explains in child-friendly language why some people don't have houses: "Some people have lost their job. Some have a health problem. No one chooses to be homeless." Without judgment or didacticism, Emma and her mom bring Margaret gifts of food, clothing, and, most of all, kindness. Delaporte's warm illustrations capture the little girl's caring nature, such as when she shakes out coins from her savings jar to buy Margaret some necessities. In an endnote, journalist and debut picture-book author Davy shares the real-life inspiration for the story as well as thoughts on the complex issues of experiencing homelessness. *—Linda Ludke*

How to Grow a Family Tree.

By Bea Birdsong. Illus. by Jasu Hu.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Holiday/Neal Porter, $18.99 (9780823453962). K–Gr. 3.



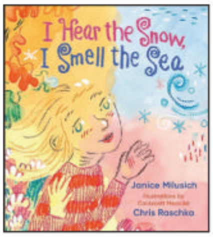
The familiar family-tree school project is thoughtfully explored in this beautifully illustrated, tender story. Emmylou's class is presenting their family trees this week, which fills her with dread. While her classmates have sprawling trees with many branches, Emmylou's has only two: Mama and herself. She knows nothing about her father or grandfather, and only that her grandmother's name is Louella—her mother shares nothing more. Unlike her peers, who learned to ride bikes from relatives, Emmylou was taught by their neighbor, Mr. Li. She is also close with other neighbors, including Mrs. Patel, who shares mango chutney, and Rosa, whose twins she helps out with after school. Watching another classmate present an expansive family tree makes Emmylou even more anxious about her own. That evening, through her "good ear," she hears Rosa wishing her good night through their shared wall. This offers Emmylou both comfort and inspiration. The next day, Emmylou presents her small family tree and explains how her tree has grown through her found family of caring neighbors. She proudly shares how they "stick together . . . like families do." Stunning textured watercolor illustrations chart her journey from loneliness and uncertainty to hope and belonging. A moving, sensitive portrait of blended and chosen families. —*Van McGary*

★ I Hear the Snow, I Smell the Sea.

By Janice Milusich. Illus. by Chris Raschka.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Random/Anne Schwartz, $18.99 (9780593308172). PreS–Gr. 3.

This lyrical celebration of the changing seasons is told from the point of view of a child who is blind. Neveah experiences the world through her senses: "my fingers and toes, my ears, my mouth and nose." In winter, the air "smells cold and whispers a secret." With a little help from her mother, Neveah actively participates in fun adventures like building a snowman and catching snowflakes on her tongue. Enjoying a springtime walk, a cool breeze ruffles the child's hair as she savors the beauty around her. Finding a hyacinth, she traces the curl of each "thin waxy petal" and breathes in "their prettiness." The sound of buzzing bees makes her "teeth tingle." Playing at the beach in summer, she delights in the grainy sensation of sand: "Mommy pours a trickle into my palm, and it spills through my fingers." In autumn, Neveah rakes leaves into a big pile and then dives in with a joyous "*plop!*" A teacher of visually impaired preschoolers, Milusich presents a descriptive, dynamic text that employs onomatopoetic words with great aplomb, from the muffled "*thumpity-thump*" of mittens clapping to the sharp "*keee-oowww!*" of a seagull's shriek. Raschka's signature swirling, impressionistic illustrations capture the joyful seasonal vignettes. Encouraging reflection, this is an immersive, empowering picture book about inclusion, abilities, and appreciation of "wonders all around." —*Linda Ludke*



I Want to Eat My Brother.

By Hélène Gaudy. Illus. by Simone Rea. Tr. by Julia Grawemeyer.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Levine Querido/Em Querido, $18.99 (9781646145706). PreS–Gr. 2.

Oskar's parents offer plenty of tasty and nutritious options for dinner, but the only thing he wants to eat is, well, his brother. This oddball premise sets the tone for a darkly silly story that blends absurdity with familiar dinnertime struggles. Parts of this French import may give pause to some American readers, from the idea of eating a sibling to a casual offer from the parents to their young bunny of "fish swimming in beer," rendered as a foaming amber pint glass containing some kind of carp. The humor works best when it embraces the surreal: a sausage becomes a snowboard, a head of lettuce turns into a mountain, and a seafood salad parades through the kitchen. These unexpected twists and visual gags bring a burst of imaginative energy to the table, while the graphite and watercolor pencil illustrations add a warm, classic feel, grounding the chaos in cozy family life. A quirky choice for story times about food, picky eaters, or mealtime drama that will delight children with its taste for the strange and silly. —*Kirsten Caldwell*

Lena the Chicken (But Really a Dinosaur!).

By Linda Bailey. Illus. by K-Fai Steele.

Oct. 2025. 56p. Tundra, $18.99 (9781774880135). K–Gr. 3.

Lena is a chicken (bird) who lives with a bunch of other chickens (birds) who are all huge chickens (cowards). Lena is decidedly not a chicken (coward), because she believes in her heart of hearts that she's not even a chicken (bird); in fact, Lena believes she's a dinosaur! Unfortunately, Lena's dinosaurian confidence is unappreciated—until the night a weasel breaks into the chicken coop. As all the other chickens (birds/cowards) freak out, Lena goes deep into herself, summoning the strength of her dino ancestors, and she produces a dino-roar so big that it shakes the very Earth (and the coop), scaring off (and humiliating) the intruder. Lena is now beloved—and also seen as undoubtedly being a dinosaur. Even the human girl who looks after them is delighted to discover that chickens (birds) are indeed descended from dinosaurs, a fact that is expanded upon in the book's back matter, along with some nonfiction resources for further learning. A hilarious story, elevated by Steele's uproarious illustrations (per usual), that also introduces some good knowledge. —*Ronny Khuri*

★ Little Moments in a Big Universe.

By Todd Stewart. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Owlkids, $19.95 (9781771475907). K–Gr. 3.

Space explorer Yamis and robot Oio travel the stars in search of adventure when their spaceship suddenly malfunctions and they become stranded on an unknown planet. Afraid and lost, the duo fret their hour of fate, but amid their predicament the universe listens; strange glowing creatures appear and guide them to a gathering place where together they discover an all-encompassing mutual benevolence. There they exchange crash-site cleanup service and stories for spaceship repairs, forging a new, unbreakable bond across the universe in cheerful celebration. Stewart's blend of natural language, otherworldly and celestial illustrations that glow with soft light, and cleverly positioned word clusters create an ingenious backdrop for a rich story that invites readers' imaginations to soar. The simultaneous narrative shifts and complementary visuals motivate emergent readers with the dual reward of nurturing curiosity and learning basic astronomical concepts. What's more, the interconnectedness between relatively microcosmic life-forms and the macrocosmic universe delivers a powerful message of how kindness transcends even the far-removed vastness of space. Each page is an evocative constellation, highlighting the importance of altruistic actions that are the building blocks for connection, even among beings as different as Yamis or the glowing creatures. An extraordinary addition to any library and a heartfelt reminder that each of us in every moment, however little or big, plays a cosmic role in the infinite universe. —*Nick Mullenmeister*

Todd Stewart
Little Moments in a Big Universe

A Lost Cause.

By Felicita Sala. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 48p. Abrams, $18.99 (9781419766916). K–Gr. 2.

Pablo the Pig cannot stop losing his possessions. He's lost his shoes and shorts (on separate occasions), his favorite dinosaur, and a Hulk Hogan action figure, among many other things. Every time he misplaces something, his parents help him search for the missing items. Tired of Pablo's carelessness, his parents finally tell him, "You will have to look for things all by yourself." Unbothered, Pablo carries on until a show-and-tell assignment leaves him exasperated. He cannot find any of the items he wants to present! Unexpectedly, the story takes a magical twist when Pablo's painted rock, Rocco, comes to life and helps Pablo find his missing objects, teaching the young pig a lesson on the value of objects in the process. Sala's illustrations—created with watercolor, gouache, and colored pencils—are vibrant and endearing. Chaotic depictions of Pablo's messy bedroom are full of captivating details, and a labeled spread of his lost items, as well as the weird and unexpected places they have turned up, will draw chuckles from readers who may relate to Pablo's predicament. —*Ana Menchaca*

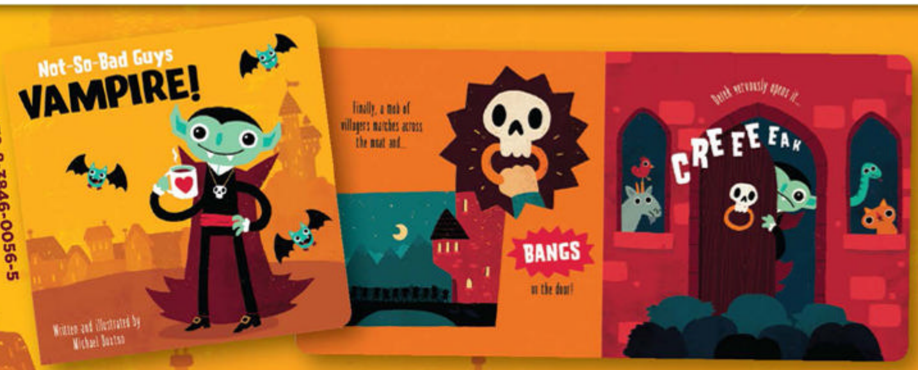
Moby Duck.

By Peter Raymundo. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Dial, $18.99 (9780593531341). PreS–Gr. 1.

Captain Herman has been sailing the seas for a long time, which makes him confident he'll find his rubbery pal Moby Duck in no time, even as the frightful landscape of the bathtub keeps putting dangerous obstacles in his path. With a nod to the classic novel primarily through word play (Captain Herman, unlike Ahab, is on a journey of friendship rather than revenge), *Moby Duck* is a simple portrait of how imagination can make bath time a lot more fun. Bold, sharp artwork cleverly combines bath time imagery—soapsuds, a faucet—with imaginative, cinematic ocean vistas and underwater perspectives. With a simple story and a short length, this could easily be a bath time read, possibly used to distract more active bath time players from leaving the bathroom as stormy as Captain Herman does. *Moby Duck* will immerse young readers in a story of maritime adventure while still reminding them they have the tools to create their own seafaring stories. —*Molly Horan*

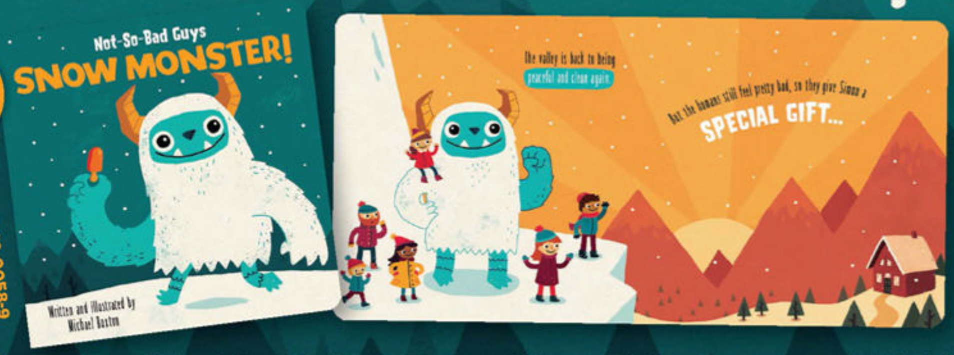
Falling for these new board books!


Not-So-Bad Guys
VAMPIRE!
Written and illustrated by
Michael Buxton
Finally, a mob of villagers marches across the moat and...
BANGS
on the door!
Derek nervously opens it...
CREEEEAK

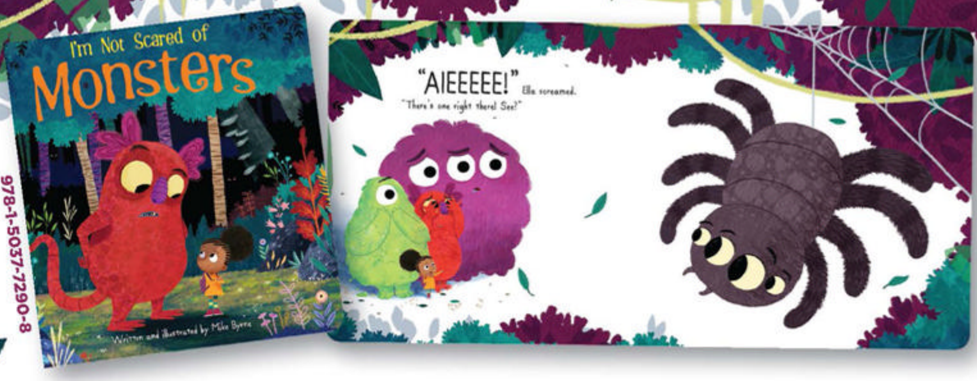
979-8-3846-0056-5

"...this is an excellent tool for teaching tolerance and empathy."
— School Library Journal

Coming 9/16

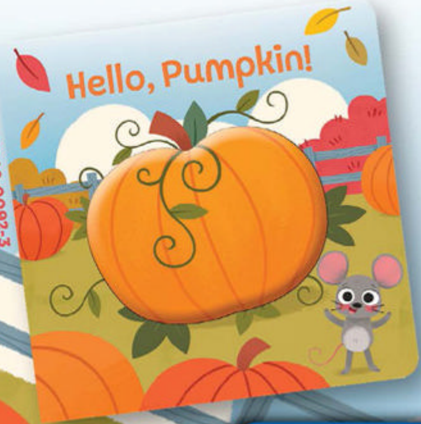

Not-So-Bad Guys
SNOW MONSTER!
Written and illustrated by
Michael Buxton
The valley is back to being
peaceful and clean again.
But the humans still feel pretty bad, so they give Simon a
SPECIAL GIFT...

979-8-3846-0058-9


I'm Not Scared of
Monsters
Written and illustrated by Mike Byrne
"AIEEEEE!" Ella screamed.
"There's one right there! See?"

978-1-5037-7290-8

"The illustrations are beautiful and bright."
— Children's Literature


Hello, Pumpkin!

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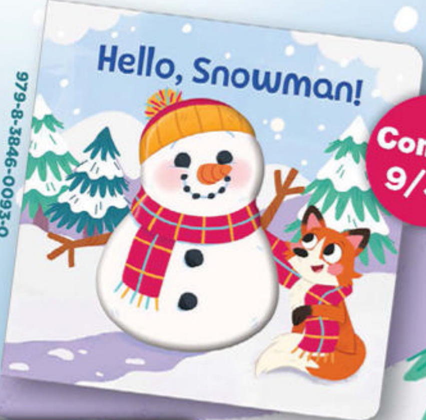
Hello, Snowman!

979-8-3846-0093-0

Coming 9/30

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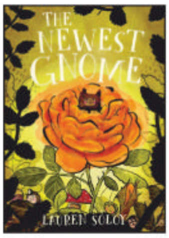
The Newest Gnome.

By Lauren Soloy. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 72p. Tundra, $19.99 (9781774887202). PreS–Gr. 3.

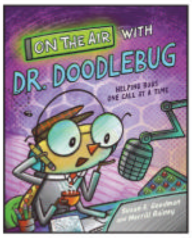


This spinoff of the wondrously beautiful *The Hidden World of Gnomes* (2023) reintroduces readers to the enchanting, natural world of The Pocket by following a young gnome, Grolly Maru, as they are introduced to the many sweet, harmonious ways of their people. Striking a familiar, hypnotically peaceful cadence, Soloy draws readers deep into her world, one lesson at a time, as Grolly Maru learns about the many circles found in nature (acorn caps, rabbit poop, Pearl Pigeon's eyes); Cob Tiggy's best hat ideas (a snail, a raspberry, a dandelion puff); Rose Gladly's favorite leaves (oak, clover, rose); plus various games, songs, stretches, snacks (including a real, kid-friendly recipe embedded into the text), and more. Between these episodic introductions, interstitial spreads give readers a nice, long breath, presenting a pair of wordless, six-panel pages that simply show a natural progression of some sort: clouds shifting, strawberries ripening, birds gathering. At every step, the wonder, beauty, and mystery of nature is on display, with Soloy's soft, endearing artwork delighting on every earthy, cream-colored page. The wonderfully busy day is capped off by a poetic reflection from Grolly Maru, adding a new layer of meaning to this lovely reverie of a book. A gorgeous blend of imagination and appreciation that will entertain, inform, and inspire anyone with a heart. —*Ronny Khuri*

On the Air with Dr. Doodlebug.

By Susan E. Goodman. Illus. by Merrill Rainey.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Astra/Hippo Park, $18.99 (9781662640025). K–Gr. 3.



Dr. Doodlebug is the friendly and knowledgeable host of a webcast into which other insects call for advice. The questions and answers are substantive and interesting, with just the right level of detail. A caterpillar calls in concerned about its constant need to eat and its new urge to hang upside down and spin itself into a sack. The wise and compassionate doctor explains that these feelings are a totally normal part of the metamorphosis process. He later helps a stink bug come to terms with its odor (it's a superpower for self-defense) and advises a lost ant to use pheromones to find its way home. The insect's-eye point of view is not just fun, it also gives reasons for and meaning to the questions and answers. Rainey's art is integral to the story. Much of it is told in graphic-novel-style panels, and Dr. Doodlebug sketches doodles (of course!) to help answer the other insects' questions. The playful writing integrates plenty of insect puns (e.g., a gnat named Gnatalie), and the colorful cartoon illustrations will easily hold readers' attention. Imaginative and engaging, this mix of fact and fiction makes learning about insects fun. —*Miriam Aronin*

Piggypine.

By Richard T. Morris. Illus. by Charles Santoso.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy, $19.99 (9781665925303). PreS–Gr. 2.

A narrator has just concluded a tale when an unusual illustration bursts onto the scene, looking for his story. The confused narrator inquires further, but the little fellow is equally bewildered. "Someone drew me on a piece of paper, and then everything went dark," he muses, introducing himself as a Piggypine: half pig, half porcupine, and all adorable appeal with his rotund tum, soft quills, and curly tail. Unfortunately, the impatient narrator needs to begin another story about a young girl adopting her first dog and politely asks Piggypine to exit. The undeterred animal instead inserts himself into "My First Dog" in increasingly silly ways, wriggling his way into the central narrative and an unexpectedly happy ending. The hilarious story-within-a-story routine works wonderfully, and readers will have no trouble tracking character contributions due to different fonts assigned to every individual. Piggypine's irrepressible spirit and unflagging enthusiasm are a joy, and soft, pencil-like illustrations cleverly capture his remarkable range of emotions and movements. Come for the marvelously memorable Piggypine and leave with a new appreciation for the power of perseverance. —*Emily Graham*

The Pirate Moms.

By Jodie Lancet-Grant. Illus. by Lydia Corry.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Interlink/Crocodile, $19.95 (9781623715779). K–Gr. 3.

When Billy's teacher plans a field trip on a boat, his moms are excited to chaperone; Billy, though, is worried. He just wants his family to be "normal," but they have a pet parrot, and sea shanties are part of daily life. He persuades his moms to tone it down, so reluctantly they wear subdued coats instead of their usual eye patches and hats, but—shiver me timbers!—a sudden storm damages the ship and Captain Fishface gets trapped in the bathroom! Billy's moms reveal that their coats have been hiding their pirate gear the whole time, and to everyone's delight, their cutlasses and seafaring skills save the day. Jaunty, colorful illustrations include plenty of pirate-themed details, and the rainbows that emerge from the ship's cannons serve as both a celebratory contrast to the dark storm and an unspoken nod to his moms' pride at sharing their authentic selves. This romp of a story wraps a common fear—that one's family might seem weird to others—in humor and love, cheerfully celebrating our differences without being preachy. —*Elisha Brookover*

A Place Just for Me.

By Loredana Baldinucci. Illus. by Melinda Berti. Tr. by Monica Meneghetti.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Greystone Kids, $19.95 (9781778402388). K–Gr. 3.

Silver Mouse is part of a multigenerational family whose bustling home in a large tree doesn't contain a quiet space for him to call his own. So, he ventures into the forest around him to seek privacy in the homes of other woodland animals. Each residence, while ideal for the animal already living there, fails to give Silver his longed-for peace and comfort, and he makes his way back home, where his beloved family has a welcome surprise waiting for him. Originally published in Italian, the text incorporates challenging vocabulary without breaking much new ground in terms of plot. Young readers tired of siblings and other family members invading their spaces and searching for respite will identify with Silver's longing for privacy and be warmed by the thoughtfulness of his loving family. Intricate colored-pencil drawings offer cutaway views of the various animals' homes, which will delight readers and have them returning again and again to search for new details. The overall experience is a gentle journey well suited to emerging and confident young readers. —*Casey O'Leary*

A Pond, a Poet and Three Pests.

By Caroline Adderson. Illus. by Lauren Tamaki.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Groundwood, $19.99 (9781773068930). K–Gr. 2.

In this original episode, the poet Bashō sits down next to a pond, closes his eyes, and takes no apparent notice as a golden carp, a graceful water lily, and a whining mosquito all insistently beg for his attention: "O, Bashō! Big fan. My life? It could fill a book of poetry!" Using brushed ink on wet paper to create atmospheric moonlit scenes, Tamaki depicts a poet at work, sitting quietly, seemingly oblivious to distractions, and responding at last not to the elegant fish, the lovely flower, or the long-legged insect diva but to the plain frog who takes a flying leap into the pond and inspires the most famous haiku ever: "Old pond— / Frog jumps in. / Splash!" In an afterword that includes an analysis, transliteration, and direct translation of the poem as well as comments about the poet and the poetic form, Adderson invites readers to do as Bashō did: go outside themselves, close their eyes, and then express in three lines and as few words as possible what they perceive most intensely. —*John Peters*

Rain and the Reading Horse.

By Maria Gianferrari. Illus. by Hannah Salyer.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Clarion, $19.99 (9780063257252). PreS–Gr. 2.

A stressful situation is gradually eased by a bond between a girl and a horse. "Rain had never read to a horse before—but this was a new school program, Giddy Up and

Read." Rain makes repeat visits to the barn, and while Snow—a gentle, white mare—is a patient listener, when "the words got stuck" in Rain's throat, she turns from reading to caring for Snow instead. Mucking, combing, and feeding Snow is calming, unlike reading aloud; it "unwound Rain's worries of being on display." As Rain becomes more comfortable, she both reads to and rides the speckled white horse. Building upon themes from the author's *Hello Goodbye Dog* (2017) to spotlight an emotionally supportive variation on a "paws to read" program, the sensitive text is patient with Rain's read-aloud progress and setbacks. Fluid full-page colored pencil and chalk pastel drawings in mostly cool, pastoral shades make emphatic use of occasional angry lines and warm tones to convey Rain's palpable spikes in anxiety. A wonderfully reassuring pick for introverts and equine enthusiasts, with notes and resources appended. —*Kit Ballenger*

Ruby Maps Her World.

By Jane Yolen. Illus. by Dow Phumiruk.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, $18.99 (9780316478441). PreS–Gr. 3.

On her birthday morning, Ruby finds a present on her bedside table: a notebook and five markers. Excited, she thinks about her plans: for the first time, Ruby is going to make a map on her own, without help from her mother, a cartographer. After breakfast, Ruby, her dog, and her mother walk to a nearby trail. Occasionally, Ruby stops to open her notebook, draw their surroundings and fellow travelers, and record her dog's commentary: "WOOF WOOF WOOF." Ruby notices a flock of birds flying overhead as well as people on bikes and a family of deer in a nearby meadow. She and her mother sit on a park bench, where Ruby's father meets them before taking Ruby to his home for a party. An appended section discusses the rewards of teaching kids to create their own maps. In this fundamentally quiet story, Ruby's parents, though apparently separated or divorced, find a way for each of them to be with Ruby on her birthday. The expressive digital illustrations reflect this picture book's positive tone and happy ending. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Sleep Here, Wake There.

By Caio Zero. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 36p. Floris, $18.99 (9781782509271). PreS–Gr. 2.

In this pleasing picture book, a Brazilian illustrator and comic book artist shares a memory that was a puzzling mystery to him during his early childhood: Every night, little Caio's mother tucks him into his bed and he falls asleep. The next morning, he wakes up in a different bed at his aunt's house! What's happening? Is he sleepwalking every night? Do aliens repeatedly abduct him and deliver him to his aunt's home? Is there a magic portal between the two places? But one night, he isn't quite asleep when his mother carries him to the car and drives him to his auntie's house, where he sleeps while she works a night job; she picks him up on the way home. Now an adult, Zero creates inviting digital illustrations of his memories, telling his childhood mystery story simply and directly while sharing the awesome, magical possibilities that he imagined long ago. More than most contemporary picture books, this one tells an original tale with the power of an authentic family story that never gets old. —*Carolyn Phelan*

A Song for Two Homes.

By Michael Datcher. Illus. by Charly Palmer.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Random House Studio, $18.99 (9780593429365). K–Gr. 3.

Auset's parents are divorced. She has two homes, two Christmases, two birthday parties, and one broken heart. When she feels sad, she soothes herself with the music of Bob Marley and her stuffed dolphin, Dolphie, which acts as her therapist when her human therapist doesn't provide the help she needs. Told through lyrical free verse, Auset's story will draw empathy from young readers as she struggles to fit in her newly split-up world. Colorful acrylic-on-canvas artwork is alive with emotion and dynamic perspective, as rough brushstrokes create textured backgrounds upon which intangible objects and feelings, such as "Marley's healing words" made manifest in musical notes and butterflies, surround Auset. The illustrations show that even though Auset feels sadness over her parents' divorce, she still experiences joy from the love both parents provide. Auset and her family are Black, and elements of Black culture and heritage are sprinkled throughout. Picture-book collections will be well served by this book, which will help young readers know that they are not alone or to blame as their family goes through divorce. —*Ashley Leffel*

A Sound in the Night.

By María Coco. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 64p. Penguin Workshop/RISE, $19.99 (9780593890608). PreS–K.

Author and illustrator Coco conjures suspense and warmth in this wordless picture book about friendship. The colored pencil and grease pencil illustrations, featuring a limited palette of blues, yellows, pinks, and pops of orange, express action and emotion through vivid facial expressions and body movements. The story follows a girl, who's old enough to drive, as she prepares for a camping trip with her dog. In the woods, they play fetch, fly a kite, swim, and pitch their tent. As night falls, they make s'mores by the fire and then settle in to sleep. Suddenly, a loud "crack" startles them awake. Fear and hesitation are captured in a sequence of panels as the girl and her dog investigate the cause. A flashlight reveals the scary source to be a cute, stray cat, whom they befriend and

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enjoy activities with the next day. Soon, it's time to return home, and the family's heartwarming expansion is revealed. A simple, sweet story effectively told through engaging artwork. —*Van McGary*

Sticky Hermana.

By Ana Siqueira. Illus. by Olivia de Castro.

Oct. 2025. 32p. Charlesbridge, $17.99 (9781623545796). K–Gr. 3.

Claudia and Monica love being sisters. They do everything together, from playing to making Brazilian pastries. But sometimes together can be too much. Little sister Monica doesn't want to miss out on anything Claudia is doing, and her intrusive habits are feeling . . . sticky: "Following-Claudia-and-amigos-around sticky. Always-invading-games sticky." Finally, Claudia gets the courage to tell Monica that she would like to go to her soccer game alone, but that she'll play with Monica afterward. And, to her surprise, Monica is OK with that because she decides that she'll go to the beach with her cousins instead. This is a great read-aloud about sibling love, conflict resolution, communication, and compromise. The boldly colored illustrations by De Castro are eye-catching and expressive as they depict the big feelings the sisters are experiencing. An author's note explains how this story is based on Siqueira's relationship with her own little sister as they grew up in Brazil. A helpful glossary of the Spanish words concludes. Also available in a Spanish edition, *Hermana pegajosa*. —*Rosie Camargo*

Strange Creatures.

By Cristina Sitja Rubio and Cristóbal León. Illus. by Cristina Sitja Rubio.

Oct. 2025. 44p. Kids Can, $21.99 (9781525313806). PreS–Gr. 2.

The forest animals have been enjoying an uneventful summer when "a mysterious poster" appears advertising a party. Following the merriment, the animals return home to a horrifying sight: "Our homes had disappeared. Only their skeletons remained." Wandering among tree stumps, the birds, bears, and bunnies fret before building makeshift shelters of trash dumped nearby. After eventually finding their beloved trees "cut into pieces!" by "strange creatures" (humans), the animals reclaim their stolen homes and guide the people through replanting the woods. In this heavily allegorical modern fable shining light on the climate refugee crisis and deforestation, the spare, first-person-plural text brings immediacy to the story, allowing readers to clearly see the negative and positive impacts humans can have on environmental health. Full-page gouache and colored-pencil illustrations on buttery backgrounds are animal-forward, with looser human portraiture and bold, hand-lettered text often overlaying somewhat tumultuous art. Its impact isn't subtle, and the book should find a happy home where conversations around environmental advocacy already abound. —*Kit Ballenger*

Street Puppy, Masjid Cat.

By Moniza Hossain. Illus. by Wastana Haikal.

Oct. 2025. 32p. little bee, $18.99 (9781499817560). PreS–Gr. 2.

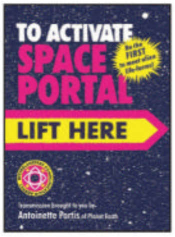
The paths of two animals from opposite walks of life unexpectedly cross in this sweet picture book about understanding and compassion. The disparate day-to-day realities of a stray dog eking out a meager, hardscrabble existence and a pampered cat residing comfortably inside a mosque are relayed in spare rhyming verse: "Beg for a bite. / Meow for a treat / Nothing to scrounge . . . / Too much to eat." Split-panel illustrations by Indonesian artist Haikal effectively contrast their different lives. While the hot sun beats down on the scruffy, panting puppy, a fan inside the Islamic house of worship cools the purring feline. Both animals are drawn to the call to prayer time, but with an icy stare and a hostile hiss, the cat rebuffs the dog's friendly wave and "sad little woof." The imam chastises the cat's haughty behavior: "All animals need kindness and care." Tenets of Islam are explained in an author's note. An empathetic tale of friendship forged through kindness. —*Linda Ludke*

★ To Activate Space Portal, Lift Here.

By Antoinette Portis. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 56p. Holiday/Neal Porter, $18.99 (9780823459858). PreS–Gr. 3.

Opening this enticing picture book launches readers into an out-of-this-world space-portal adventure. Each inventively designed, double-page spread resembles a handheld device, complete with power button and an auto-translate feature. A first glance seemingly offers a close-up view of a big, black circle in an orange box, but turning the pages affords a wider perspective and reveals more and more of Zrk and Blrg, two bright-neon, tuber-shaped space oddities. The curious creatures have a funny feeling someone is staring at them: "There is something out there!" "It is definitely not from here." Fearing the worst, they exclaim, "ALIENS ARE REAL!!!!" Alarmed, Zrk and Blrg wonder, "Hey Alien, can you talk? Are you going to come over here and eat us?" Readers are asked to show their teeth. Relieved no threat is posed ("those are very tiny teeth"), the extraterrestrials begin to shoot the breeze and share get-to-know-you tidbits. Proud residents of Xyl (the "most important planet in the most important solar system in the most important galaxy in the universe"), they have never heard of "Planeturth." Dwindling battery power necessitates a hasty but heartfelt farewell. Interactive intergalactic fun, with a stellar lesson in interplanetary interpersonal relations. —*Linda Ludke*



Together We Are Sunshine.

By Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow. Illus. by Raissa Figueroa.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Random House Studio, $18.99 (9780593705414). PreS–Gr. 3.

Three sisters with big smiles and brown skin enjoy the warmth of the sunshine as they play outside. Middle sister Haala wants to follow what her older sister, Sanaa, does, but little Munira's interruptions impede Haala's efforts to squint at the sun like Sanaa. As the sisters spin to become one with the wind, the youngest sister breaks the spinning spell. As the three approach a pond, Sanaa tells her sisters to be quiet if they want to hear the secrets of the goldfish . . . but again Munira fails to comply. Haala realizes that Munira can't help herself, and that perhaps she should be more patient with the youngest one. The sisters help one another climb a tree, where they sit together on a branch and proclaim, "Together we are sunshine." The textured illustrations, with rich jewel tones, convey a deep and wondrous natural world, showing readers why the sisters are so eager to explore. A thoughtful contemplation on siblings, patience, and how patience can be an act of love and understanding. —*Ana Menchaca*

★ The Trickster Shadow.

By Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley. Illus. by the author.

Oct. 2025. 40p. Little, Brown, $18.99 (9780316574518). PreS–Gr. 2.

THE
TRICKSTER
SHADOW

"Zoon was an ordinary boy with a peculiar problem. His shadow would not leave him alone." Zoon's shadow isn't like those traditionally cast by a human body—it's a rambunctious dog, one that's always knocking things over in his bedroom and causing disruptions at school. Zoon seeks comfort from his nookomis (grandmother), and she dusts off an old drum decorated with a painted bear and strawberries, "a dewe'igan, the sound of the heart," and encourages Zoon to use the drum's powerful heartbeat to guide his own. When the shadow confronts Zoon next, tormenting him, Zoon stands "tall like a bear" and calms his heart so—"*BAH-DUM*"—it "beat[s] in rhythm with the drum." Zoon's spirit, "like a bear, big and strong," dances, and "Zoon's shadow danced along," now companionably. Dynamic digital illustrations in a fiery palette shot through with rich violet feature Zoon in profile, similar to Duncan Tonatiuh's traditional Mixtec work. Well-paced, emotive text shifts in color to sit cleanly on the page. Ancestral connections, occasional Anishinaabemowin words (detailed in a glossary), and Ojibwe iconography, like the strawberry and bear, seamlessly support Zoon's strong cultural identity, shared by the author. A delightfully engaging and empowering story on its own, this will pair wonderfully with traditional trickster tales from other cultures for storytime and school units. —*Kit Ballenger*

Adult Fiction

Alchemy of Secrets.

By Stephanie Garber. Read by Sutton Foster.

Oct. 2025. 10hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250403124).

Beloved YA fantasy and paranormal-romance author Garber defends her reigning talents in this dazzling debut adult novel. Holland St. James has always been enchanted by all things magical, even studying folklore and myths academically after an enigmatic course taught by the equally cryptic Professor. Unlike her peers, Holland believes magic is real. Her conviction is immediately founded when she speaks with a local legend, the Watch Man, who proclaims that Holland will die the next day unless she finds a mystical object: the Alchemical Heart. As Holland falls deeper into Los Angeles' spellbinding underbelly, a (somehow) unique paranormal love triangle ensues set against a velvety Old Hollywood aesthetic. You never know what's going to happen next . . . and sometimes, convincingly, neither do the characters. Foster's evocative and consistent tone throws the reader a lifeline amid a multitude of uncanny characters and mindbending plots as Garber twists and turns the narrative at every corner. Foster herself will attract listeners; the two-time Tony-award winning actor has cemented herself culturally as *the* Broadway It-Girl and reaches over a million fans on social media. *—Abby McCabe*

> **YA:** *Already abuzz online, Garber's newest is reeling in dedicated fans of her bestselling Caraval and Once Upon a Broken Heart YA series. Foster's narration will also be adored by younger readers interested in Broadway. AM.*

Angel Down.

By Daniel Kraus. Read by Kirby Heyborne.

2025. 8.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781668114742).

In best-selling Kraus' (*Whalefall*, 2023) haunting and ambitious latest, a ragtag group of WWI soldiers discovers the key to ending the conflict, but risk destroying themselves in the process. In No Man's Land, infantryman/card sharp Cyril Bagger is tasked with leading a team to mercy-kill a dying comrade whose anguished shrieks are driving everyone in their company insane. But it's not a soldier they find—it's a fallen angel, and she's emitting a light so powerful it mesmerizes the shell-shocked soldiers. Deciding to risk desertion rather than surrender the angel to their power-hungry general, the members of Bagger's team become convinced she alone can end their suffering. The novel is written as a single sentence, and Kraus' unrelenting prose is perfectly complemented by Heyborne's breathless narration, his tone ratcheting up the tension as Bagger navigates the horrors of warfare and the human condition. Heyborne's emotional performance is haunted yet hopeful, capturing the weight of all that Bagger has experienced. *—Kaitlin Conner*

Crocodile on the Sandbank [Dramatized Adaptation].

By Elizabeth Peters. Read by a full cast.

2025. 9.5hr. GraphicAudio, DD (9798890559876).

In this cinematic adaptation of the classic opener of the Amelia Peabody series, listeners are introduced to the inimitable lead character, a rule-breaking Victorian world traveler who becomes entangled in the misadventures of a young woman in distress, her beastly-bad former lover, and a pair of Egyptologist brothers in a high-stakes mystery involving an inheritance and a rogue mummy. Reminiscent of Agatha Christie's desert-set archaeological novels, this has plenty of shenanigans within an informative frame. Peters' first Amelia Peabody mystery, written in 1975, has gotten a 21st-century reboot via this Graphic Audio adaptation. It's like listening to a movie with over-the-top narration, as well as background music and ambient sounds to set the scenes (some more effectively than others). The full cast of narrators brings the characters alive: the good are great, the bad are despicable, and the mystery is inexplicable to the very end. There is high humor and a melodramatic air to the whole production, drawing the listener along. Though perhaps not for everyone, certain genre fans (mystery, sci-fi, fantasy) are well-suited to this alternate, high-octane manner of production. This was a hoot. Adventurous listeners should try it! *—Beth Rosania*

A Dog in Georgia.

By Lauren Grodstein. Read by Katie Koster.

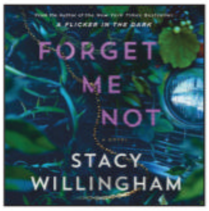
2025. 10hr. Hachette Audio, DD (9781668650431).

Koster deftly assumes an international cast, tracking a 46-year-old woman searching for purpose. Amy, born a Minnesotan, left for NYC at exactly 18, following the promise of modeling gigs. She soon walked into Judd's glamorous restaurant to cook, eventually married him, then spent more time stepmothering his son, Ferry, who calls her Dos (Uno is Judd's first wife and Ferry's mother, whose name is also Amy). Now that Ferry is a Cornell sophomore, Amy is untethered. Judd's latest philandering pushes her to an impromptu trip to Tbilisi where the plight of a missing dog has reached Amy's wallet. She arrives in Georgia to stay with Irine, who founded the "Justice for Angel" campaign. Also living with Irine are her mother, two aunts, her teen daughter, a dozen(-ish) dogs, and a Russian deserter. Each will impact Amy's stay, smacking at her tone-deaf entitlement, denting her myopia, reawakening her stifled sexuality. Koster gamely assumes genders, accents, ages, backgrounds, emotions, reactions, although audiences may realize that more than ten hours of aimless Amy is a tough journey to follow. *—Terry Hong*

★ Forget Me Not.

By Stacy Willingham. Read by Karissa Vacker and Helen Laser.

2025. 9.5hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250395122).



Claire Campbell returns to small-town South Carolina to visit her mother, stepping into her childhood home for the first time in years after escaping to the city to become an investigative journalist. Even 22 years later, Claire is plagued by the disappearance and suspected murder of her older sister Natalie. When Claire goes to visit the island-locked muscadine farm Natalie used to work at, she impulsively takes a job as a live-in summer picker, longing for the solace and beauty of a month on the beautiful Gallagher Farm. However, when Claire stumbles on an old, hidden diary in the guest house, her investigative nature takes hold and she begins to question her employers and this once-Edenic escape. With the discovery of the diary comes an intertwining of multiple generations and the introduction of a second POV narrated by Laser. Though Claire makes listeners want to repeatedly yell "Don't open the door!," Willingham's sensitive attention to her loss and life crisis makes her incredibly relatable. Vacker is Willingham's only regular reader and for good reason; her delivery as Claire, and dynamic ability to portray a wide array of Southern accents, are remarkable. This is the creepy, Southern gothic *Tom Lake* (Patchett, 2023) you've been waiting for. *—Abby McCabe*

Ghost Fish.

By Stuart Pennebaker. Read by Hallie Ricardo.

2025. 7hr. Hachette Audio, DD (9781668649374).

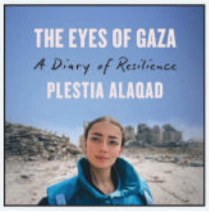
Pennebaker scrutinizes stifling grief in her debut novel about a 23-year-old woman whose sister, grandmother, and mother are all dead, leaving her the "family's only remnant and it really sucked sometimes to be so alone." The untethered Alison left Georgia for NYC where she lives in a tiny East Village apartment, with too many roommates, working as a restaurant host. Her constant companion sits on her windowsill in a pickle jar: the eponymous ghost fish that inexplicably, viscerally, *is* her younger sister. Alison was 17 when 16-year-old Clementine "walked in the ocean and never came out," but she's back, giving Alison something like a do-over, another chance to take care of Clementine, a responsibility Alison believes that she had failed even before Clementine died. Alison needs to grasp her own life but she can't lose Clementine all over again . . . or can she? Ricardo absorbs Alison's grief, empathically bearing the weight of loss, loneliness, and longing. She makes slight adjustments for additional characters—tone, accent, timbre—but the spotlight remains on Alison as she thrashes and struggles to be alive. *—Terry Hong*

Podcast Connection

The Eyes of Gaza: A Diary of Resilience.

By Plestia Alaqad. Read by the author.

2025. 5hr. Hachette Audio, DD (9781668652886).

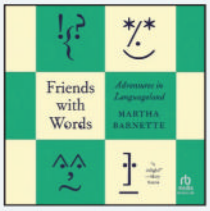


A somber male voice opens and closes the credits, as if Alaqad doesn't have a second longer to narrate beyond her own words. "*Only in Gaza;/ You sleep counting rockets rather than stars./ You wake up, if you wake up, to the sounds of bombs rather than birds*," she opens, exposing the dire reality of her homeland. After earning her media and journalism degree abroad, she said, "there was no place I wanted to be other than Gaza." She hoped "to show the world Gaza through my eyes." Then October 7, 2023 ... but "history didn't start [that] day," she reminds. As war raged, she turned her social media into an intimate diary, bearing witness to the relentless inhumanity from hospitals, bombed homes, rubbled streets, broken communities. Just as important, Alaqad unyieldingly celebrates life: "*Only in Gaza;/ Despite the pain,/ People remain./ Not just survivors,/ But warriors.*" The epistolary and episodic structure will appeal to podcast listeners. Alaqad's youthful, rhythmic voice is a soothing balm, wrenching lament, tenacious promise, a *cri de coeur*. The repetition of her homeland's name throughout, adamantly pronounced as a native speaker, is a mantra of resilient love. —*Terry Hong*

Friends with Words: Adventures in Languageland.

By Martha Barnette. Read by the author.

2025. 10hr. Dreamscape, DD (9798349107696).

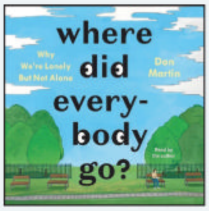


Word aficionados will find this an interesting approach to the evolution of language over time. Barnette shares her journey into linguistics, from casual conversations with a favorite Greek professor to becoming a co-host and co-producer of *A Way With Words,* a popular public radio broadcast highlighting her love of the spoken word. Barnette's fascination becomes the focus as she explores the entomology of popular speech. Written in memoir style, following the migration of the author's work and presented in the format of a podcast, Barnette shines light on familiar lexical favorites as she expertly weaves the regional colloquial vernacular into words heard every day. Humor and pleasant vocal intonations make this an interesting listen for lovers of verbal rhetoric. Listeners will want to keep a notebook and pen close by to take notes for future reference. —*Ardith Eyring*

Where Did Everybody Go? Why We're Lonely But Not Alone.

By Don Martin. Read by the author.

Nov. 2025. 4.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781668134849).



Loneliness and social isolation are trending up in the United States and worldwide. According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the U.S. Surgeon General in 2023, loneliness is considered a public health epidemic. In this audio original, Martin, a *New York Times* best-selling author, thoroughly analyzes research, personal values, and fulfillment to understand the complexities of this social and evolutionary phenomenon that can yield chronic mental and physical health consequences. Martin, a self-proclaimed research methods nerd, narrates an engaging evaluation of research and cites numerous authors, experts, and data sets. He exposes the compelling historical roots of loneliness, its measurement, contributing factors, at-risk demographics, and how loneliness and social isolation intensified after the COVID-19 pandemic. With clear-eyed precision, and in just four and a half hours, Martin helps his audience learn to understand their feelings of loneliness as intimately as their hunger and thirst. Admitting there is no one cure for loneliness, he outlines root causes and introduces a three-step action plan with strategic, creative, and groundbreaking pathways to connect and reconnect sustainable social bonds for wellness. This charming and witty audio will be a welcome addition to any self-help catalog and to fans of Mary Roach and Jennie Allen, who similarly blend scientific research and historical context with personal insight. Martin hosts the *Head On Fire* podcast, speaking with experts in search of answers to life's biggest and smallest questions. —*VaNessa Denby*

The Girl Without a Voice.

By Sandra J. Paul. Read by Eve Passeltiner.

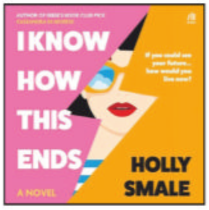
2025. 11hr. Tantor, DD (9798855578690).

This haunting psychological thriller with a slow-building sense of dread traps readers in the suffocating world of Alice, a 24-year-old woman who has never spoken a word. Born mute and kept isolated by her parents, Alice has known no one beyond them. But her fragile reality is shattered with a deathbed confession from her father. For the first time, she turns outward—tentatively reaching for connection with a neighbor. The narrative is a deliberate slow-burn, where every revelation is eked out at an almost painful pace. But that very slowness feels purposeful, echoing Alice's own life of forced patience and stillness. Passeltiner excels at sustaining tension through silence, absence, and delay, crafting a tone of vulnerability that mirrors Alice's inner world. While some listeners may be tempted to nudge the audiobook narration to a faster speed, doing so risks losing the very atmosphere that the author and narrator have so carefully built. The result is a chilling, claustrophobic tale that rewards patience. Readers who enjoyed Emma Donoghue's *Room* (2010) will feel at home in this unsettling story of secrets, solitude, and survival. —*Shellie Zeigler*

★ I Know How This Ends.

By Holly Smale. Read by Alix Dunmore.

2025. 11hr. Harlequin, DD (9781488234934).



"It's not hard to see the future," Margot posits. She's a meteorologist, after all; it's "literally [her] job to keep an eye on what lies ahead," which she does by carefully gathering data because "the signs are always there, as long as you're paying attention." She missed the details that destroyed her last relationship, wasting 10 years. This time, she's relying on careful data gathering over 20 planned dates, arranging every first meeting on a Monday at the same Italian restaurant. What she doesn't realize is that she's also had the same waiter each time. "You've been the highlight of my Monday shifts," he confesses. "There's absolutely zero chemistry," she muses, until she recognizes Henry's hand . . . and she agrees he'll be Date Seventeen. Margot has realized she can glimpse the future, and there are some outcomes she really doesn't want. Can she, should she, will she affect change? British actor/accent coach Dunmore is a wondrous cipher, catching all manner of Margots—current and beyond, scathing and vulnerable, shattered and joyful, desperate and resolved. She's wonderfully adaptive with kind Henry, his dramatic six-year-old Winter, Margot's indulgent granddad, her efficient neighbor and friend-to-be Polly. Dunmore turns Margot's failed dates into entertaining life lessons, her BFF reunions into enviable out(pour)ings. Listening to Margot, Henry, and Winter fall in love together becomes a soulfully edifying aural gift. —*Terry Hong*

The Knowing.

By Madeleine Ryan. Read by Stevie McKeon.

2025. 5hr. Brilliance/Bolinda, DD (9781038030610).

"When Camille realised she'd forgotten her phone, she wanted to cry." She has a specific routine to get to work, timed within minutes—drive to the station, get her coffee, settle into the Quiet Carriage. This Valentine's Day, especially, she *can't* be late. What began as a dream job has quickly devolved into "dreams of running from [her boss] Holly." Without a phone, Camille doesn't know the time, she can't communicate instantly, she can't even access her travel or payment cards. Most of all, she can't scroll any feeds, which means "she cannot distract herself from these intolerable aspects of her humanness." Being screen-free, however, forces Camille to improvise, adapt, and adjust. In a single day, Camille will transform her life. Neurodiverse Australian novelist Ryan, who narrated her debut, *A Room Called Earth*, hands the mic to fellow Australian actor McKeon, who deftly acclimates to Camille's reactions—resolved, frustrated, introspective, determined, relieved. McKeon controls Camille's broad range, never over-emoting, capturing Camille's own impressive ability to "seem very 'fine' when she wants to." —*Terry Hong*

Love, Coffee, and Revolution.

By Stefanie Leder. Read by Inés del Castillo.

2025. 9hr. Blackstone, DD (9798874796778).

With just one semester left of college, the overwhelmingly passive and naïve Dee Blum drops out of Berkeley and accepts an eco-tourism job in Costa Rica, much to the surprise and dismay of her overbearing Jewish family and insufferable soon-to-be ex-boyfriend. Desperately searching for meaning and escape, Dee begins work (that she is insanely underqualified for) creating "truth tours," wherein tourists travel to Costa Rica and visit organic, Fair Trade certified coffee farms in order to educate Westerners. Dee quickly meets her first dazzling love interest, Adrián, a native who isn't afraid to poke at her bubble and challenge her preconceptions. Where Adrián is classified as politically controversial, the charming revolutionary Matías, from work, ideologically aligns with Dee and inspires her fellow progressive passions. When Dee discovers deception and fraud in the coffee industry, her radical beliefs are put to the real-world test and she's forced to reconsider who she can trust. del Castillo manages to portray *both* English and Spanish-speakers speaking *both* languages with such minute detail and fluidity that listeners are truly immersed into the Costa Rican setting. Recommend this audio to listeners who love light romances, dashes of Spanish language and South American culture, political thrillers, love triangles, and global activism. —*Abby McCabe*

Making Friends Can Be Murder.

By Kathleen West. Read by Julia Murney.

2025. 12hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217075393).

Thirty-year-old Sarah Jones may have one of the world's most common names, but when she is invited to join a group of Sarah Joneses and build a little community after relocating to Minneapolis, she has finally found a multi-generational group of people she can call friends. But when another Sarah Jones, this one somewhat famous, is thrown off a Minneapolis bridge, our Sarah finds herself, along with a handsome FBI agent, flung into the heart of the investigation. The Sarahs must put their heads together to solve this puzzle, along with a few other mysteries thrown their way, in this witty and charming cozy mystery. Considering the considerably large cast of characters with the same name, narrator Murney makes sure to give distinct, memorable voices to each of the Sarahs. From a somewhat bratty 17-year-old Sarah to the sharply witty 69-year-old Sarah, the characters have distinguishing voices, allowing the listener to enjoy and keep pace. Sarah's grandmother's Boston accent is an amusing addition to the Sarah Joneses, and her dialogue is both snappy and sweet. A unique pleasure for cozy mystery lovers, especially those who enjoy Midwestern locales. —*Joy Matteson*

The Midnight Shift.

By Cheon Seon-Ran. Read by Rosa Escoda.

2025. 7.5hr. Bloomsbury, DD (9781639735983).

Three women alternate chapters in Cheon's cult Korean best-seller: detective Suyeon, investigating a string of alleged suicide deaths at an eldercare facility where her (chosen) Granny Eunshim resides; nurse Nanju, who inherits her late abusive father's debt and gets "offered a way out, [an option] in blood instead of numbers"; and vampire hunter Violette, a transracial adoptee seeking to avenge her French father's vicious death. Bloodless corpses with two puncture wounds might make the narrative obvious, but Cheon transforms the familiar into a resonating meditation on the "lonely blood" all manner of humans carry—because of isolation, loss, choice—that draws death and destruction. Polyglot Escoda's soft lisp becomes less noticeable as the hours pass, balanced by her soft British English and Korean fluency. The addition of some accents, however, seems odd; in France, Violette's father speaks (farcically) Frenchified English, but Violette and Lily do not. More believably, Escoda assigns Seoul-domiciled, former-Berliner Greta an accent when conversing with fluent local Suyeon. Avoiding such inconsistency would have made for a more convincing, consistent performance. —*Terry Hong*

Plays Well with Others.

By Lauren Myracle. Read by Kelli Tager.

2025. 9hr. Blackstone, DD (9798874711788).

Tager dials up the dark humor in her narration of this adult thriller debut from best-selling YA author Lauren Myracle. Jacquelyn "Jake" Nolan moves to the Sweetwater Bungalows to start over after experiencing a series of devastating losses: a stillbirth, her husband leaving her for her best friend, and an online scandal that destroys her reputation. But Sweetwater proves anything but sweet, with residents brimming with secrets and lies. Among Sweetwater's finest are Mabel, an eccentric with a taste for revenge; Vanessa, a single mother who mistreats her son Billy; and Wendell and Delilah, two children marked by severe trauma. The narrative shifts among multiple perspectives, and Tager navigates these transitions seamlessly between ages, personalities, and tones. Her performance heightens the satirical bite of Myracle's portrait of suburban drama, gossip, and deeply flawed characters, creating a compulsive listening experience. The juxtaposition of unhinged, over-the-top antics with serious subjects—including child abuse, child loss, and domestic violence—creates sharp tonal swings that may prove unsettling. This one will resonate most with fans who like their domestic thrillers on the darker, heavier side. —*Van McGary*

★ The Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires [Dramatized Adaptation].

By Grady Hendrix. Read by a full cast.

2025. 12.5hr. GraphicAudio, DD (9798890559456).

GraphicAudio
THE SOUTHERN BOOK CLUB'S GUIDE TO SLAYING VAMPIRES
GRADY HENDRIX

Yes, Bahni Turpin's 2020 narration of the original was grand, but then Graphic Audio decided to turn it into a horrifically delightful "movie in your mind." Welcome back to 1988 Charleston, where Patricia is trying to get everything done for the kids, her mother-in-law, the house, before heading to book club where she's supposed to be the discussant for *Cry the Beloved Country*, which she hasn't exactly read. Ignominiously escaping the meeting's gatekeeper, Patricia gets invited to join a breakoff faction, discussing trashy true-crime paperbacks with other privileged, bored, southern housewives Kitty, Maryellen, Slick, and Grace. Gracious Southern living goes on (and on and on) until charming, dangerous James moves into the neighborhood; inviting him into the fold enables a path of gruesome destruction. Patricia must figure out how to exorcise such evil. Nearly three dozen narrators create this aural feast, enhanced with eerie music and a satisfyingly squelchy, slurpy, slimy soundtrack. Dawn Ursula sets an addictive tone as the narrator. DC stage actor Kimberly Gilbert is a convincing marvel as Patricia; Rayner Gabriel is irresistibly (un)deadly James. Nhea Durousseau is a fabulous warning beacon as Mrs. Greene. Patricia's fellow slayers—Emlyn McFarland as Kitty, Lise Bruneau as Maryellen, Karen Novack as Slick, Marni Penning as Grace—form an exemplary supporting quartet. Be warned: being scared witless was never such fun. —*Terry Hong*

Listen-alikes

Songs for Other People's Weddings

by Heather Booth

Books about music and musicians are nothing new, but what David Levithan and Jens Lekman have done in the audiobook version of *Songs for Other People's Weddings* is new, notable, and brings readers an experience they can only get through this format. It's an unexpected and welcome treat for the audio production to offer this richness. For listeners seeking other books with supporting musical enhancements, try any of these tuneful works of fiction and musical memoir.

Broken Horses. By Brandi Carlile. Read by the author. 2021. 10hr. Books on Tape, CD (9780593340110).

Carlile's warm and evocative voice carries the same raw honesty as her music, but it's the music itself that makes this book so powerful. She recorded new acoustic versions of more than 30 songs for the audiobook. Between chapters, she sings the songs that impacted each period of her life.

Circumstances Affecting the Heat of the Sun's Rays. By Amanda Quaid. Performed by a full cast. 2025. 1.5hr. L.A. Theatre Works, DD (9781682661918).

Amateur but astute scientist Eunice Foote's life makes for a fascinating play and a marvelously dramatic audio production. Vigorous string music separates the scenes, effectively indicating Foote's unending work and focus. A significant contribution to works on early feminism and a commentary on ecology and the industrial revolution, all with a memorable musical backdrop.

Fractal Noise. By Christopher Paolini. Read by Jennifer Hale. 2023. 10hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250870995).

This sf thriller and prequel in Paolini's Fractalverse series is audibly enhanced in many ways. But it is the song by character Talia, sung in narrator Hale's bittersweet tones, that delivers the book's emotional wallop.

Miracle and Wonder: Conversations with Paul Simon. By Malcolm Gladwell and Bruce Headlam. Read by a full cast. 2021. 9hr. Pushkin, DD (9781735803258).

Those who enjoyed the singer-songwriter insights of Levithan and Lekman's *Songs* will appreciate the deep dive Gladwell and Headlam take into the musical mind of Simon. Listeners get a front-row seat to the creative process and will hear snippets of music across decades of work.

My Name Is Barbra. By Barbra Streisand. Read by the author. 2023. 48hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593788455).

The icon tells the story of her life as a media sensation from her Brooklyn beginnings. Her voice is familiar and comfortable, but beyond her capable reading, what really elevates this to star status are the clips from such familiar songs as "Silent Night," "Happy Days Are Here Again," and "Stoney End."

Soundtrack. By Jason Reynolds. Read by a full cast. 2025. 6.5hr. Listening Library, DD (9780593863473). Gr. 7–10.

The audio-exclusive title from Reynolds is a celebration of music and song, shifting our concept of what an audiobook can be. Stuy moves in with his Uncle Lucky and builds a band that leads to musical success. Grammy-winning composer Justin Ellington crafts a score to back the adventure, and soundscapes bolster this triumphant, audio-first story.

Whale Fall. By Elizabeth O'Connor. Read by a full cast. 2024. 4hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593829998).

O'Connor's debut is written with lyricism woven into the fabric of its story of Manod, a young woman on the precipice of awareness when ethnographers descend on her isolated Welsh island. Gwyneth Keyworth leads a wondrous full-cast performance, definitively embodying young Manod—hopeful, disillusioned, determined—as she scrutinizes, ponders, plans, and even sings (!) through O'Connor's raw, spare gem of a book.

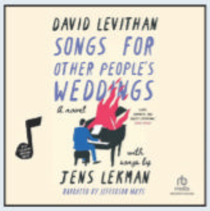
Spent: A Comic Novel.
By Alison Bechdel. Read by the author and a full cast.

2025. 4.5hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063278950).

Award-wining comic book artist Bechdel delightfully plumbs her real life for material in this "comic novel." Her voice lends further gravitas as the story's narrator; her experienced fictional stand-in is theater actor Jenn Colella, who has previously played Alison as a character in the musical adaptation of *Fun Home*. Fictional Alison (paralleling Bechdel) is a cartoonist who lives in Vermont with her wife Holly, and—surprise!—transforms her life into an impressively successful graphic memoir. *This* Alison's work, *DEATH & Taxidermy,* is a streaming sensation; despite how it diverges from Alison's original, it stars Sarah Paulson and Benedict Cumberbatch, so of course their friends gather for watch parties. Alison's rather stuck on her next title, perhaps over-relying on Marx's *Das Kapital* even as she can't kick her online shopping habit. Holly, meanwhile, is becoming a social media sensation, getting rather close to the new veterinarian. Their longtime friends—a couple and single—become a throuple, approved and applauded by the couple's college-age daughter who, with her friends, just might save the world. Over a dozen narrators, unidentified (but whyyyy?) as to who reads who, bring Bechdel's smart, inquisitive, thoroughly entertaining panels to life. *—Terry Hong*

★ **Songs for Other People's Weddings.**
By David Levithan and Jens Lekman. Read by Jefferson Mays.

2025. 11hr. Recorded Books, DD (9798895949245).



Levithan's coauthor, Swedish singer-songwriter Lekman, has been composing songs for other people's weddings for 21 years. This novel, Levithan's second for adults, began with Lekman's lyrics for imagined couples. Around these songs, Levithan constructs the story of J, a Swedish musician, and V, the PR "keeper" of a teenage tech prodigy. J is a musician of some acclaim and is sought after to perform at weddings around Europe and the U.S. But when V's company moves to New York and her role ramps up, J is the one left behind for the first time. The distance proves a significant challenge, as do both V's and J's growing awareness of what they want—and don't want—in a relationship. Mays is an astute, Edoardo Ballerini-esque cipher, using slight variations in tone for characters and altering accents in subtle but noticeable ways to indicate nationality. He quite cleverly doesn't change his voice at all for the couple so dedicated to unity in their nuptials that they share a single tuxedo. The novel is structured around each wedding: a costume-party wedding, a celebrity influencer's gala, a polyamorous performance artist couple's ironic anti-union, courthouse celebrations, and more. Each couple is serenaded by J, and the joyful treat for listeners is that Lekman performs each heartfelt, often very catchy song. *—Heather Booth*

The Uproar.

By Karim Dimechkie. Read by Justin Price.

2025. 12hr. Hachette Audio, DD (9781668649329).

The Uproar
A Novel
Karim Dimechkie

Press play and the low-grade panic will set in almost immediately, superbly regulated throughout by chameleonic Price. Adjoua redefines Sharif as white-presenting, nodding at his paternal Lebanese heritage as she prefers her husband "not be *only* white." Thoroughly aware of his "full privileges [as] a white man," Sharif proudly works at a nonprofit serving disadvantaged New Yorkers. Adjoua, the daughter of Ivorian immigrants, is currently a stalled writer. Their unborn daughter is diagnosed with leukemia in utero, requiring the couple to rehome Judy, their beloved 150-pound pit-bull mastiff. The forceful no-thank-you's among friends and family are relentless, but Emmanuel, a client Sharif barely knows, agrees to a paid two-week stay. When Sharif returns unannounced to Emmanuel's apartment to deliver forgotten medicine, he finds Judy in severe distress, tied to a 14th-floor fire escape. He encounters Emmanuel's teenage son, Junior, who demands payment. Emmanuel and Junior won't give up, demanding $26k for significant injuries they blame on Sharif. Viral social media compounds their accusations. Can they fight back? Price moves effortlessly from discomfort to stress to blind desperation. He unforgettably, wholly embodies the frenzied exhaustion of his characters—revealing simmering racism, suffocating classism, the veneer of "good"-ness, and the (in)humanity of self-preservation. Agitated audiences must listen to every last word. —*Terry Hong*

What a Way to Go.

By Bella Mackie. Read by a full cast.

Oct. 2025. 12hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063457331).

Anthony, the dead man, speaks first. Played as smug, entitled, and indignant by Colin Mace, he insists that the night he died was "a pretty fantastic evening." His 60th birthday celebration was "one for the ages," elegantly executed by his wife Olivia, except for the fact he was "speared just like a fish" and his corpse found floating in the lake of their country estate. Olivia (an elegant, icy, and seething Gabrielle Glaister) must suddenly regroup her efforts from party to funeral, continuing to fulfill societal expectations for a man who kept "a plethora of mistresses and [had] a penchant for cutting moral corners." She quickly escapes the isolation of the Cotswolds back to London; her excuse of feeling "too sad to stay" masks her disdain for her four children. And then there's "The Sleuth" (brash, tenacious, and raw as narrated by Kimberly Capero) who plans to use Anthony's murder—and his survivors' not-at-all grief—to exponentially boost her social media from 512 to a half-million followers for the sake of her soon-to-be-sensational true-crime podcast. This scathingly entertaining British trio ensure quite the deadly post-mortem showdown. —*Terry Hong*

Classics Corner

Classics Corner highlights new recordings of classic titles.

The Stone Door.

By Leonora Carrington. Read by Lorna Bennett.

2025. 4hr. Tantor, DD (9798331921149).

Carrington's (1917–2011) short novel, composed of two overlapping texts with surrealist features, was written in the 1940s but did not appear in print until 1977, when the Surrealist movement was already past and much analyzed. The book, however, proudly withstood the test of its belated mise-en-scène. Narrator Bennett must navigate a unique, fantastic (in multiple senses of the word) symbology with allusions to esoteric and mythological themes unleashed by author's extraordinary imagination. Despite the intricate narrative form, the text is clearly carried by freedom of interpretation and excellently drawn characters which Bennett presents with care and a differentiating focus; the reader clearly enjoys the sparkles of the characters' wisdom and their dry humor. The author, engaged in societal development, is aware that a change of the world can only be accomplished when language itself changes. Bennett is her understanding ally in finely layered writing against the claustrophobic language of gender stereotypes. —*Milena Durek*

Whites.

By Mark Doten. Read by Andrew Gibson.

2025. 5hr. HighBridge, DD (9781696618526).

In this genre-blending collection, Doten uses satire to examine whiteness in America through 14 stories. Each story is told by a character who has the utmost confidence that their views are correct and that they have been deeply wronged. Gibson artfully embodies these self-righteous characters. He reads several stories with a cadence that makes the story feel like a poem while picking up the pace on others, displaying the frenzied rambling of someone passionately and urgently telling a story. COVID-19 plays a large role in several stories; at times, Gibson skillfully hacks and coughs rather than just reads the lines, elevating and adding a unique moment for the audio listener that the reader will not be privy to. These poignant, discussion-ready stories are not for everyone, but their performance and impact will long stay with listeners who embark on the ride. —*Lesley Cyrier*

Widow's Point: The Complete Haunting.

By Richard Chizmar and W.H. Chizmar. Read by Mia Barron and Tristan Morris.

2025. 12.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781668100639).

Widow's Point: The Complete Haunting shares the found footage of two expeditions to a famously haunted and abandoned Nova Scotia lighthouse: Thomas Livingston in 2017 and a separate team of ghost hunters in 2025. Published as a fast-paced novella in 2018, Livingston's account sets a menacing tone very early and never stops. Tristan Morris begins narrating with a breezy tone, suitable to the nonbelieving character, but listeners shouldn't get too comfortable; Morris switches gears to an understated quality that draws listeners in as the horror unfolds. Mia Barron's husky narration of one character's brief journal entries may feel a little out of place, but it doesn't break the tone. While fans of gothic horror and haunted houses may be used to a more gradually intensifying pace, listeners should be prepared for an intense ride of the truly sinister variety. Listeners who enjoyed *The Haunting of Hill House* or *We Live Here Now* will enjoy this immersive experience. —*Suzanne Temple*

The Unraveling of Julia.

By Lisa Scottoline. Read by Maria Marquis.

2025. 10.5hrs. Hachette Audio, DD (9781668648278).

LISA SCOTTOLINE
The Unraveling of Julia

Julia's adopted mother died when Julia was ten, her adopted father died soon after of a heart attack, her husband was murdered by a mugger, and now her horoscope seems to be accurately predicting her future. It's no wonder she's unraveling. When she receives a letter from an Italian lawyer claiming that she has inherited a villa, a vineyard, and a lot of money, Julia agrees to fly to Italy to investigate. She has no memory of the woman who bequeathed her the property and hopes that the search may lead to her birth family. The villa is rundown, the caretakers know nothing about their mistress, and for some reason, all the villagers hate her. It's up to Julia, with a little help from a handsome librarian, to solve the mystery. There is more than a touch of the supernatural here as Julia begins to have visions, nightmares, and ghostly visitations. The plot is intriguing, but the real draw here is reader Marquis' sparkling narration. She reads the Italian passages with ease and adds a polished Italian accent to the English speakers. Her characters are distinct and she handles the males convincingly. There's a lot of suspense in Julia's adventure, and Marquis keeps readers at the edges of their seats. Rich atmosphere, sympathetic characters, a tense plot, and first-rate narration make this a winner. —*Candace Smith*

Adult Nonfiction

Destroy This House.

By Amanda Uhle. Read by Rebekkah Ross.

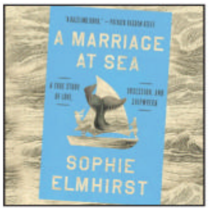
2025. 11hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781668124451).

This intimate portrait of family dysfunction gets a "less is more" audio production with a veteran narrator. Uhle, journalist and executive director of indie publishing house McSweeney's, traces the idiosyncrasies of her parents' lives, from marriage in Martinsville, Indiana, to death in suburban Detroit, using newspapers, personal correspondence, family lore, and her own accounts. Uhle's childhood reads as a twisted fairy tale—rags to riches to pastor's kid—and her adulthood as a claustrophobic nightmare as she acts as primary caregiver to two ailing, delusional con artists. Ross brings a decisive neutrality to her narration through an even pace and tone. While skirting any dark situational humor, the approach conveys a macabre mood. Ross' characterizations fit the tone of the production: distinguishable but never over the top. Stephen Long, a phoenix at reinvention, is voiced with joviality and conviction, while Sandy Long, chronic hoarder and workaholic, is characterized by clipped and even expression. Between Ross' clear and professional narration and Uhle's endlessly fascinating writing, this production should not be passed up. —*Fiona Watson*

A Marriage at Sea: A True Story of Love, Obsession, and Shipwreck.

By Sophie Elmhirst. Read by Marisa Calin.

2025. 6hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217071739).



Maurice and Maralyn Bailey were an unconventional couple. Foregoing expectations, they opted for independence and adventure and, having sold all of their property and purchased a yacht, set out in 1972 to live at sea. Due to Maurice's belief that a radio would be unduly and philosophically burdensome, they sailed unaided, truly reliant only on themselves. Their voyages took an unplanned turn when a whale capsized their boat, forcing them into a life raft with the few rations and small comforts that Maralyn could salvage. Elmhirst's account of the Bailey's survival story is getting significant acclaim, and equal praise should be heaped on narrator Calin. The Baileys made some confounding decisions, and Calin uses tone to portray them—in her English accent—as the kind of rare birds one would be eager to talk to at a cocktail party then gossip about with friends later. While she captures and shares that eccentricity with listeners, Calin is also able to portray Maurice and Maralyn as individuals with strong motivations and intentions in line with their own internal logic. The Baileys' 117 days at sea were neither the dream life they envisioned nor the horror story it could have been. Instead, Calin ensures that listeners hear it as a fascinating study of a marriage tested by adversity and brought through it by previously untapped strength. —*Heather Booth*

Mayo Clinic on Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias: A Guide for People with Dementia and Those Who Care for Them.

By Jonathon Graff-Radford and Angela Lunde. Read by Chloe Cannon.

2025. 11.5hr. Dreamscape, DD (9798349105425).

This publication provides a comprehensive and inclusive explanation of Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and related cognitive changes. Cannon's reading and interpretation are crucial to building a solid bridge between research and clinical experience and the real-world demands of daily coping. Cannon approaches the topic with unwavering patience and compassion, aware of its most sensitive, painful points, while communicating valuable knowledge and priceless advice. This book can be listened to as a preventative tool, as it offers lifestyle advice based on research in multiple disciplines, but it is also an indispensable handbook for the challenges of caregiving, from psychological reinforcement to practical tips for daily living. Cannon is aware that at the core of the book are quality-of-life issues, as much as concepts of understanding the fragile human body and psyche, both for afflicted loved ones and their caregivers who strive for excellence. A five-star book with an accessible narration that easily brings its content to a perhaps overburdened listening audience. —*Milena Durek*

Semi-Well-Adjusted Despite Literally Everything.

By Alyson Stoner. Read by the author.

2025. 11.5hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250399106).

In *Semi-Well-Adjusted Despite Nearly Everything*, former child actor Alyson Stoner offers a memoir that is as raw as it is witty. Stoner narrates their own story with a mix of vulnerability and sharp humor, pulling listeners through the pressures of Hollywood fame, identity and gender identity struggles, and the messy work of healing. Stoner opens up about their struggles, beginning with childhood anxiety at age six which later developed into heart palpitations and eating disorders. The author's voice—equal parts self-deprecating and unflinchingly childlike in its pitch and earnestness—translates beautifully to audio. They add warmth and timing to the humor, while also giving weight to the more vulnerable gut-punch moments. A perfect listen for fans of deeply confessional memoirs. This title will also resonate with readers drawn to the emotional intensity of Jennette McCurdy's *I'm Glad My Mom Died* and other works that reexamine the impact of child stardom. —*Shellie Zeigler*

Youth Audio

Avatar Legends: City of Echoes.

By Judy I. Lin. Read by Nancy Wu.

2025. 10hr. Blackstone, DD (9798874713942). Gr. 7–12.

City of Echoes launches an exciting new series about the lesser known heroes in the world of Avatar: The Last Airbender. Jin, a refugee in the Earth Nation city of Ba Sing Se, is just getting by when disaster strikes her best friend. Her determination to save her friend Susu from servitude finds her entangled in the complicated machinations of the city she now calls home. Wu's engaging narration immerses readers in the vivid world of Avatar evoked by Lin's writing. As characters both familiar and new appear, Wu is careful not to reduce any of them to one note, ensuring that all feel like living, breathing people. Though the action is frenetic at the climax, the narration and narrative keep it crisp and clear for readers to follow. Readers will finish Lin's book with a new appreciation for the world and wanting to see what's next. A great pick for fans of the Avatar franchise. —*Lizzie Matkowski*

The Bloodstone Thief.

By Sabina Khan. Read by Reena Dutt.

2025. 6hr. Scholastic, DD (9798225000332). Gr. 3–7.

When Laila goes into her parents' closet on her birthday and sees a decorative box, she assumes it contains a birthday surprise. When she opens it, she discovers instead that it contains an enchanted necklace imprisoning an evil jinn. The jinn kidnaps her father and vanishes. To save her father, Laila must travel to the world of the jinn and find the Bloodstone. While there, she must face the dark secret her father has been keeping for years. Luckily, she makes some friends who help her through. Reena Dutt narrates this heartwarming adventure and does an excellent job giving the variety of characters unique voices. Though occasionally hindered by pauses in production, Dutt's comic timing helps bring out the humorous aspects of the story. The mix of mythology, adventure, and humor will make this a perfect listen for fans of the *Children of the Lamp* series or *Skandar and the Unicorn Thief* (Steadman, 2022). —*Josie Snow*

Little Big Man.

By Varian Johnson. Read by the author.

2025. 21min. Scholastic, DD (9798225008406). PreS–Gr. 3.

Elijah is new to being a big brother and he's not liking it so far, especially when his dad cancels on their plans to fly his new kite because he has to work. This new baby means more work and less time spent together, but when his father asks Elijah to step up as the "little big man," and work alongside him at home, he starts to enjoy helping out. Cue parallel scenes of dad and Elijah working at their respective "jobsites," complete with loads of sound effects that elevate without overpowering. Ending with the apt reward of a kite-flying afternoon, Elijah learns to step up and adjust to his role as big brother. Readers can listen however they want, reading the print story along with the track (including page-turn sound effect indicators) or without page turns. Perfect for playing in the car or independent listening, the track sans page turns includes all the added sound effects and background dialogue, perfectly coloring scenes with missed context and making this a seamless audio-only listen. With excellent narration from best-selling author Johnson, *Little Big Man* is an outstanding debut picture book audio for any "little big (wo)man." —*Abby McCabe*

Loudmouth: Emma Goldman vs. America (A Love Story).

By Deborah Heiligman. Read by Lipica Shah.

2025. 11hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250415134). Gr. 9–12.

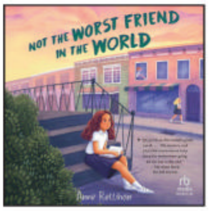
Emma Goldman's biography is read with the aplomb and enthusiasm that the subject deserves. Pulling together material from Goldman's autobiography and memoirs, and from people around her, Heiligman writes a well-paced, detailed account of the anarchist's life. Shah narrates with a gripping voice that pulls readers along and keeps the history interesting. Characters are distinguishable while the tone remains respectful to real-life historical figures. This book is perfect for young adult and adult readers wanting to learn more about Goldman's life or about the history of the working class, the "free love" movement, and other fascinating areas of American history that we aren't often taught in school. —*Van Hoang*

★ Not the Worst Friend in the World.

By Anne Rellihan. Read by Gina Rogers.

2025. 6hr. Dreamscape, DD (9798349105838). Gr. 4–6.

Have you ever wished you could stuff words back into your mouth? In this nod to *Harriet the Spy*, Rellihan's middle-grade debut deals with a rift between sixth-grade besties Lou and Francie. After spilling Francie's tightly held secret, Lou is convinced she's the worst friend in the world. Then new student Cece approaches Lou seeking help solving her own huge secret. Doesn't she realize that Lou is the last person to keep a confidence? As Lou struggles to know what she can hold inside and what should be shared with responsible adults, she learns the truths behind the secrets that have caused so many problems. Rogers narrates with feeling and brings these characters convincingly to life. The weight of Lou's shame is especially palpable, as is her indecision. Cece comes through as a child desperately living for a desired outcome that will not transpire. Francie's character is less defined, but secondary adult characters, such as Lou's mom and step-dad, provide stability and wisdom, and Cece's family adds mystery and drama. A well-paced and authentically voiced story that shares the problems friends can face as they grow into their teen years. A great listen for middle schoolers looking for characters who reflect their relationship issues and those who have enjoyed stories by Dan Gemeinhart, Lynda Mullaly Hunt, and Ann Braden. —*Beth Rosania*



Player vs. Player.

By Ash Wu. Read by Mela Lee.

2025. 1.5hr. Scholastic, DD (9798225002114). Gr. 2–5.

Lee's youthful narration, paired with occasional music and sound effects, brings to life this middle grade audiobook about three friends trapped in a *Minecraft*-like video game. Kat, Tai, and Alex constantly play the popular video game *Otherworld* together. Even though they argue, the three are friends on and offline. (A segment at band class sees the three play their instruments together discordantly, a laughter-inducing performance of recorder, accordion, and drums.) When their school announces an *Otherworld* tournament as a fundraiser, all three friends are excited to compete, but after coming off a particularly bad argument, they choose to play alone rather than as a team. But when they're magically transported into their favorite game, they have no choice but to work together to escape the monsters. Lee differentiates Kat, Tai, and Alex with an authentic emotional connection, balancing their youthful voices with the melodramatic, deep voice of the Craft King. —*Alex Richey*

Tenderly, I Am Devoured.

By Lyndall Clipstone. Read by Emily Lawrence.

2025. 12hr. Spotify Audiobooks, DD (9798882458651). Gr. 9–12.

Lacrimosa "Lark" Arriscane belongs to a family of salt miners. After being expelled from school, she returns home to find things in shambles. The salt mine has dried up and the family owes a debt to the wealthy Felimath family. Seeing no future for herself, Lark agrees to a marriage with their god, Therion, to restore the salt mine and save her family. When the ceremony is disrupted, Lark must work with the Felimath siblings, Alastair and Camille, to save herself *and* the god. Lawrence provides a melodic narration to this Gothic romance. The seductive voicing of Therion is especially enticing to the ears and brings added depth to the story. Recommend this listen to those who enjoy books like Andrew Joseph White's *The Spirit Bares Its Teeth* (2023) or who prefer their romance on the dark and gloomy side. —*Colleen Seisser*

War Games.

By Alan Gratz. Read by Jesse Vilinsky.

Oct. 2025. 9hr. Scholastic, DD (9798225000257). Gr. 4–7.

The stage is set for the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Will these games go by the book or will they belie what is really happening in Hitler's Germany? Vilinsky is Evelyn, a 13-year old gymnast, a survivor from a family visited by tragedy. Evie has achieved a near-miracle, making it to the United States Olympic team. Much more than proud representation awaits her in Nazi Berlin, however, and before she has time to make sense of the place, she is swept into a maelstrom of events transpiring—literally—at breakneck speed. Vilinsky lends her extraordinary voice to a young teenager carrying the pain of the world on her small shoulders, risking her future and her life for others. This brilliant voice actress conveys the facts and morality highlighting the unusual beauty of the main protagonist, offering the listener a gift of understanding and inspiration for friendship, solidarity, and moral action. —*Milena Durek*

What Happened Then.

By Erin Soderberg Downing. Read by a full cast.

2025. 5.5hr. Scholastic, DD (9798225027056). Gr. 3–7.

Twelve-year-old Avery is spending the summer on a remote island owned by her broken family. She has internalized the judgment that she is an overwhelming presence and dreads the impression she will make on her mother's siblings. Jax, her cousin, prefers to spend time on the Internet, which does not exist on the island. Reluctantly exploring the land and dilapidated buildings together, the cousins find mutual respect. When they discover caches of pink pages from a long-forgotten journal written by one of their aunts as a child, the tense family dynamic begins to make sense—a terrible event has haunted the family for decades. Kate Coventry plays Avery with an anxious intensity. Pete Cross as Jax provides a low-key counterpoint. Cassandra Morris expertly embodies the inquisitive, doomed journal writer. The mystery and emotional intelligence of the story, and the expert production, make this a priority purchase. —*Deidre Winterhalter*

What If You Fall for Me First?

By G. F. Miller. Read by Sunny Lu and Ali Andre Ali.

2025. 7.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781668136430). Gr. 5–7.

Sofia wants nothing more than to be noticed by Mark Chen, her crush since . . . forever. The problem? Sofia is not memorable, cool, or confident enough to *ever* make *that* work. In desperation, she enlists the help of Holden Thomas, a budding influencer looking for a project to boost his views; he thinks her glow-up might be the ticket. When everyone notices, and Mark asks Sofia to go to the school dance, she should be thrilled, but somewhere along the way she and Holden realized they like being with each other. Sofia is faced with a choice: should she keep working towards her dream or should she take a risk on Holden? Told in alternating perspectives, this book captures the middle-school drive to impress others and the fear that doing so means losing yourself. Both narrators perfectly capture this emotional whirlwind, bringing the confusion and tender moments to life. A delicious middle-school romance that will make underdogs feel seen. Perfect for readers who loved *Perfect Match* by Stephanie Faris (2015), or *Give Me a Sign* by Anna Sortino (2023). —*Josie Snow*

Booklist Backlist

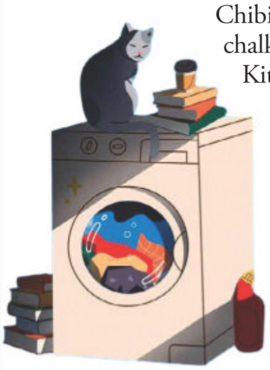
Japanese and Korean Healing Fiction

By Terry Hong

Readers know that books are the cure for much of what ails us, providing escape from headlines and headaches. These comforting and diverting tales are part of a burgeoning international genre known as J- and K-healing, books from Japan and Korea, respectively, that are enjoying impressive success. Here's an assortment of recent soul-nurturing best-sellers with wide appeal.

The Curious Kitten at the Chibineko Kitchen. By Yuta Takahashi. Tr. by Cat Anderson. 2025. Penguin.

A certain seaside restaurant outside Tokyo can only be found by word-of-mouth. Visitors are welcomed by a friendly feline—Chibineko, meaning "little cat"—and a chalkboard announcing, "The Chibineko Kitchen / We serve remembrance meals." Their kagezen—gustatory offerings added to late loved ones' altars—provide a magical portal for brief reunions with the beloved dead: "You can hear your loved one's voice again" and receive the exact answers necessary to move forward. Takahashi, invitingly translated by Anderson, transforms tragedies into healing journeys of communal kindness in this delicious start to an eight-part series.



The Healing Season of Pottery. By Yeon Somin. Tr. by Clare Richards. 2024. Algonquin.

After imploding her TV-writing career, Jungmin became a shut-in. Nine months later, she finally ventures out and walks into a pottery workshop, mistaking it for a café. There, two women welcome her to join their coffee break. The studio becomes Jungmin's restorative haven, where she builds new relationships, repairs old wounds, dares new hopes, and considers other futures, all while nurturing new artistic, personal, and professional skills. Richards warmly translates Yeon's exquisite, winsome Korean import.

Marigold Mind Laundry. By Jungeun Yun. Tr. by Shanna Tan. 2024. Dial.

Timeless Jieun is mired in "aching loneliness . . . immune to life's joy." After living a million lives, she still hangs on to the slim hope of miraculous reunion with her beloved family. This time, she's settled in the coastal village of Marigold, creating a welcoming haven where she serves her special tea before visitors head upstairs to "a space where stains of the heart would be removed and wrinkled feelings ironed." A stalled filmmaker, a betrayed lover, a disgraced "celeb influencer," a musically inclined photographer, and a struggling single mother all walk through Jieun's doors for revelatory cleansing.

The Passengers on the Hankyu Line. By Hiro Arikawa. Tr. by Allison Markin Powell. 2025. Berkley.

Arikawa offers quotidian glimpses of 11 train passengers in Japan's Kansai region as they travel in one direction, then return six months later, revealing transformations in between. As they move between stations, random encounters inspire and bind these regular patrons: kindness wins, kindness rewards. Thoughtfully translated by Powell, Arikawa's work persuasively looks deep inside disparate souls, sharing illuminating realizations, supporting heartfelt decisions, and encouraging reinventions for everyday people living everyday lives.

The Second Chance Convenience Store. By Kim Ho-yeon. Tr. by Janet Hong. 2025. HarperPerennial.

A lucky phone call leads to the return of Mrs. Yeom's stolen wallet, sparking a startling relationship with Dokgo, an unhoused stranger whose alcohol-induced dementia hides a gentle heart. Mrs. Yeom, a retired history teacher, runs a neighborhood convenience store that provides much-needed jobs. She surprisingly adds Dokgo to her roster. Loud complaints morph into empathic appreciation. With warmth and stability, Dokgo confronts his troubled past, as effortlessly translated by Hong.

The Curious Kitten at the Chibineko Kitchen
Yuta Takahashi
A Novel
Translated by CAT ANDERSON
JUNGEUN YUN
MARIGOLD MIND LAUNDRY
HIRO ARIKAWA
The Travelling Cat Chronicles
The Passengers on the Hankyu Line
ALLISON MARKIN POWELL

We'll Prescribe You a Cat; We'll Prescribe You Another Cat. By Syou Ishida. Tr. by E. Madison Shimoda. 2024-2025. Berkley.

At a certain Kyoto intersection is a narrow alley opening that leads (sometimes) to the heavy fifth-floor door of the Nakagyō Kokoro Clinic for the Soul. The staff—acerbic nurse Chitose and affable Dr. Nikké—might initially seem strange, but their feline therapies always work. In between patients, Ishida shares Chitose and Nikké's grab-the-tissues origin stories, eliciting persuasive reminders to adopt, don't shop. In these two novels, charmingly translated by Shimoda, Ishida poignantly proves that cats are, indeed, the perfect antidotes to contemporary challenges. The third in the series is due out in 2026.

Yeonnam-Dong's Smiley Laundromat. By Kim Jiyun. Tr. by Shanna Tan. 2025. Pegasus.

At Smiley Laundromat in Seoul's Yeonnam-dong neighborhood, patrons will find sparkling machines, free coffee, wonderful books, plus an olive-green diary that becomes an inviting confessional-of-sorts. Between the pages, strangers make serendipitous connections, which lead to mutually lifesaving bonds. Strangers—who olfactorily recognize one another from Smiley's distinct amber-lavender dryer sheets—become protectors, friends, even family. Tan smoothly translates.

Art from *The Second Chance Convenience Store* and *Yeonnam-Dong's Smiley Laundromat.*

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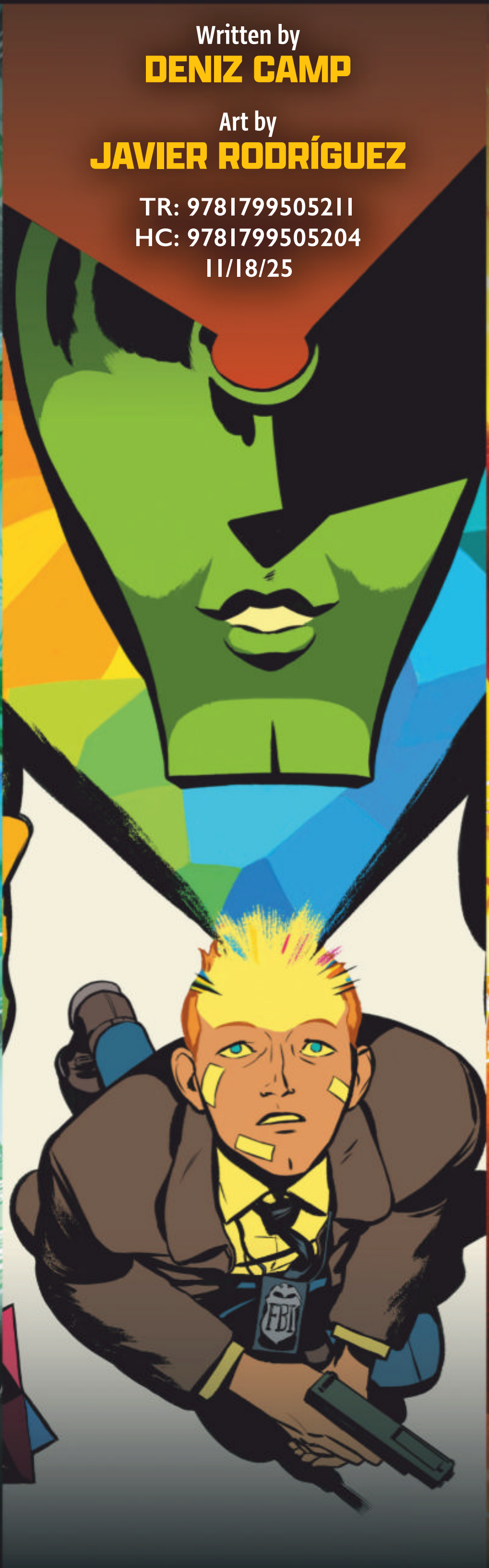

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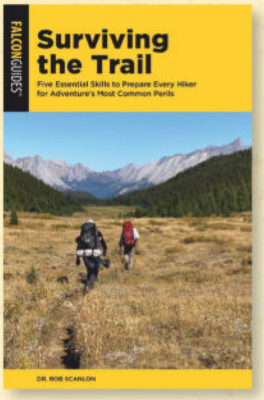
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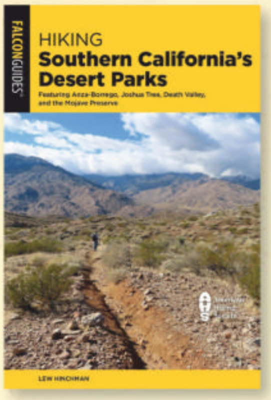
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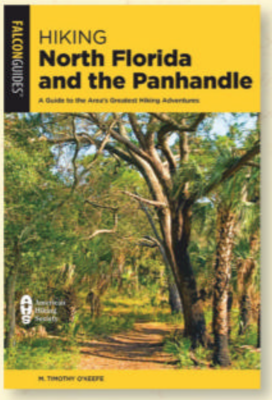
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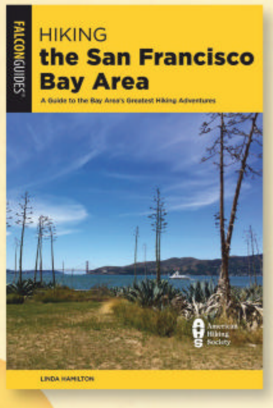
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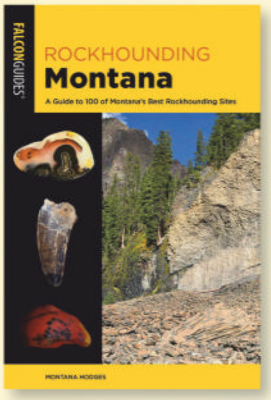
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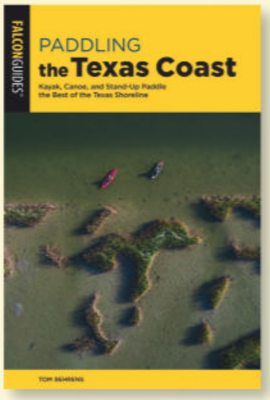
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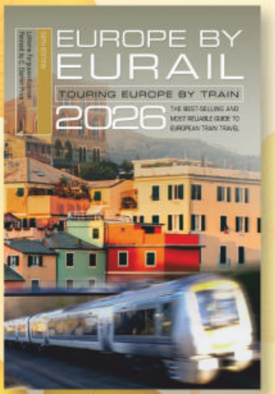
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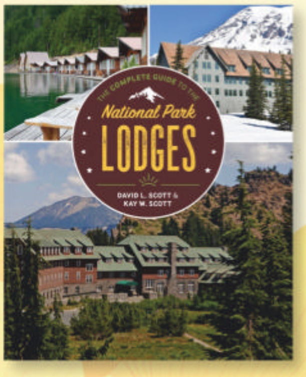
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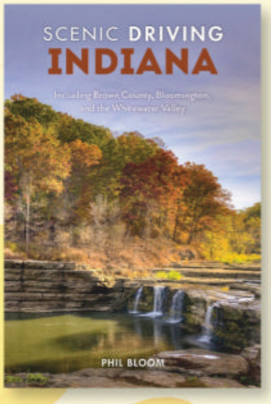
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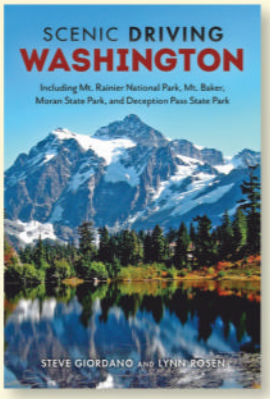
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